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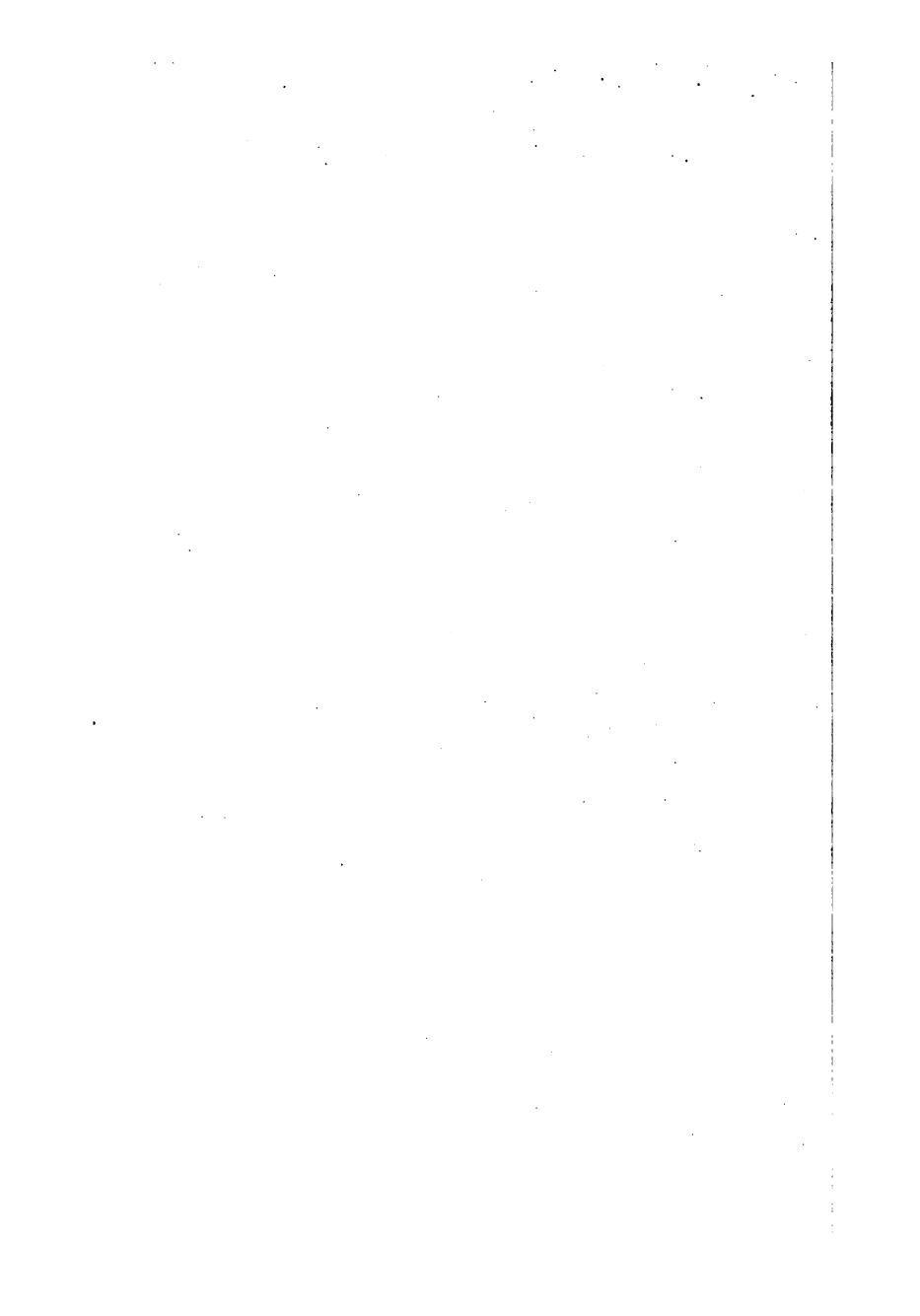


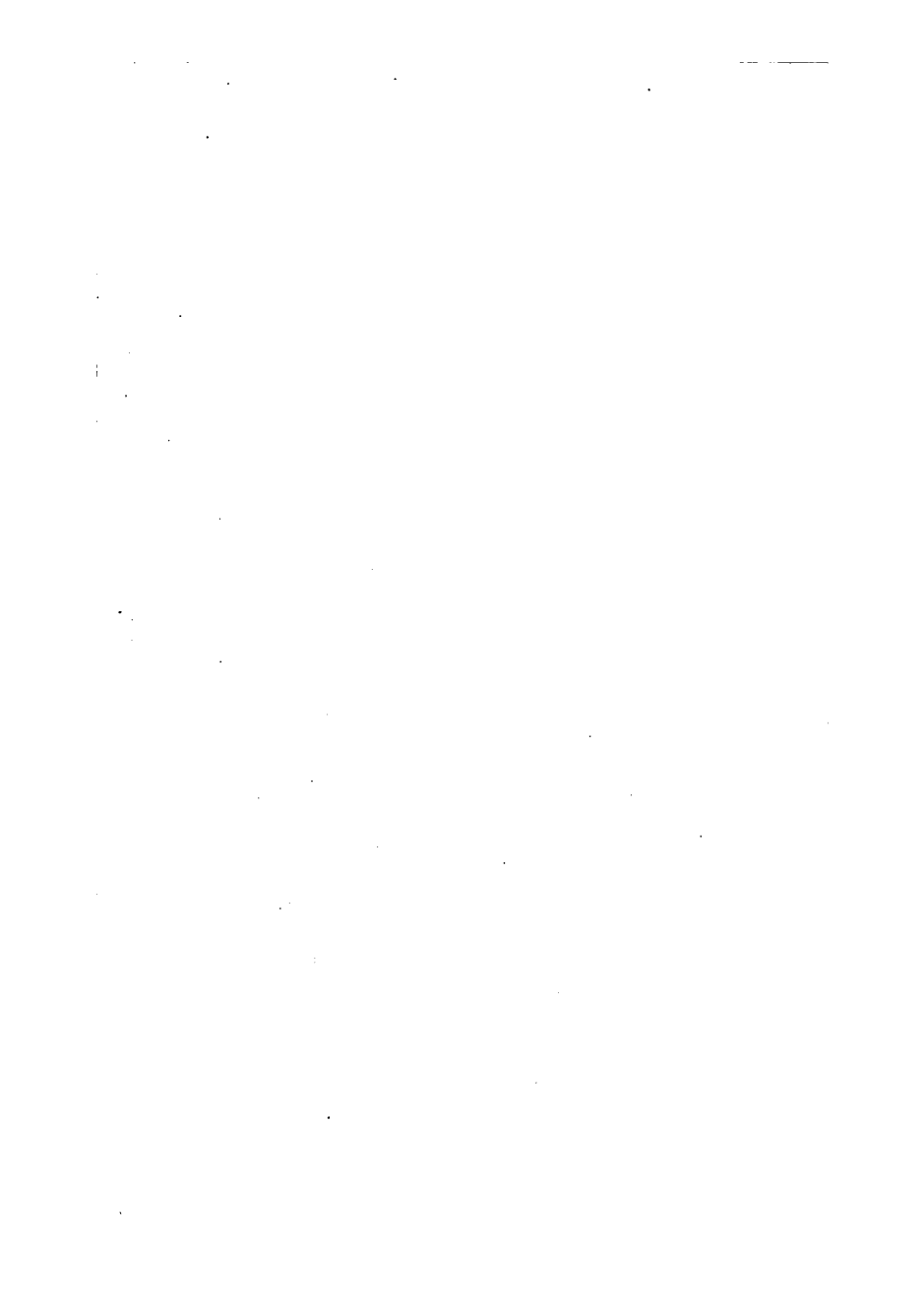
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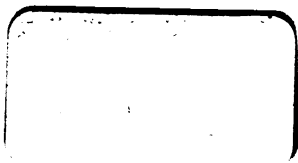


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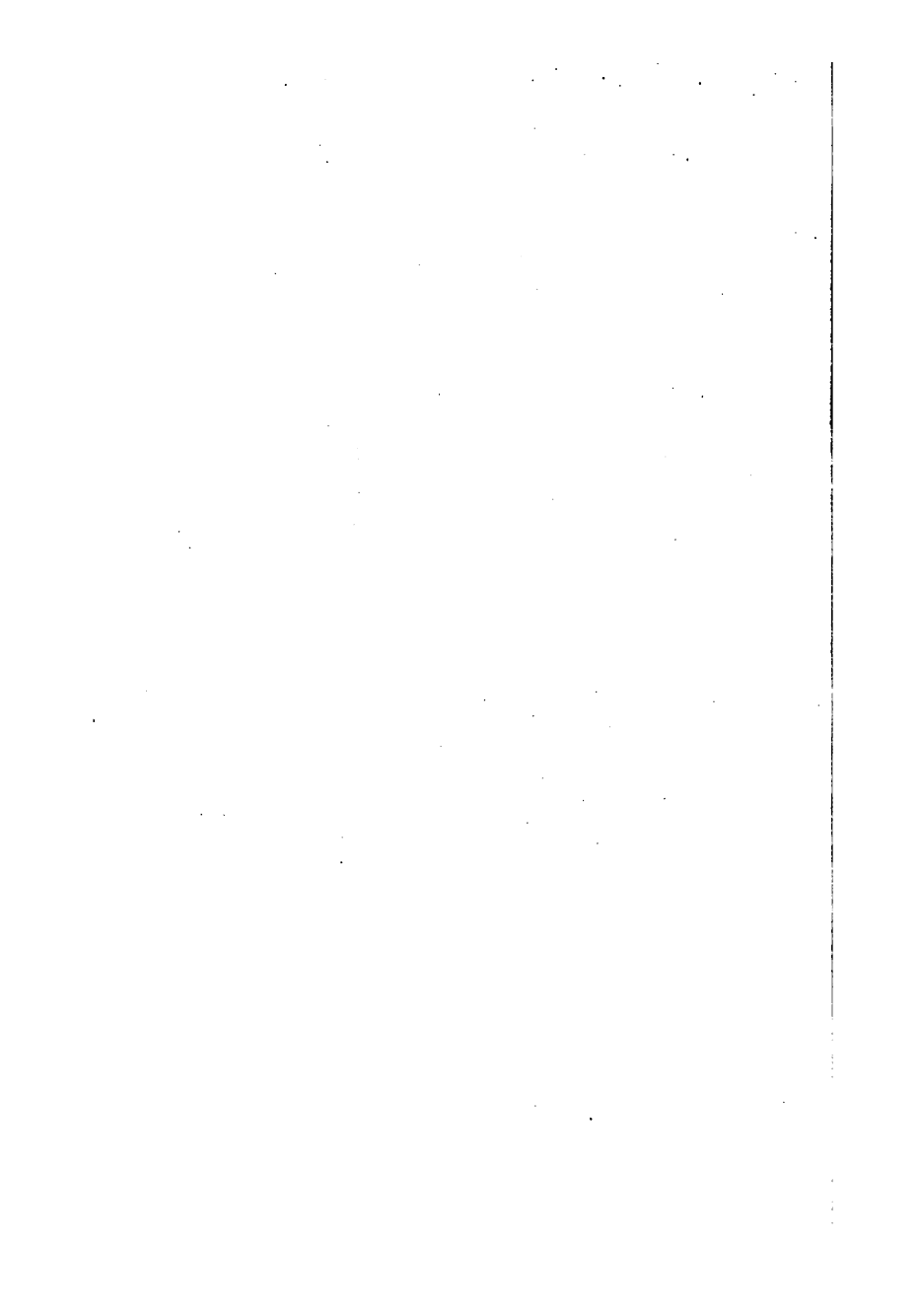
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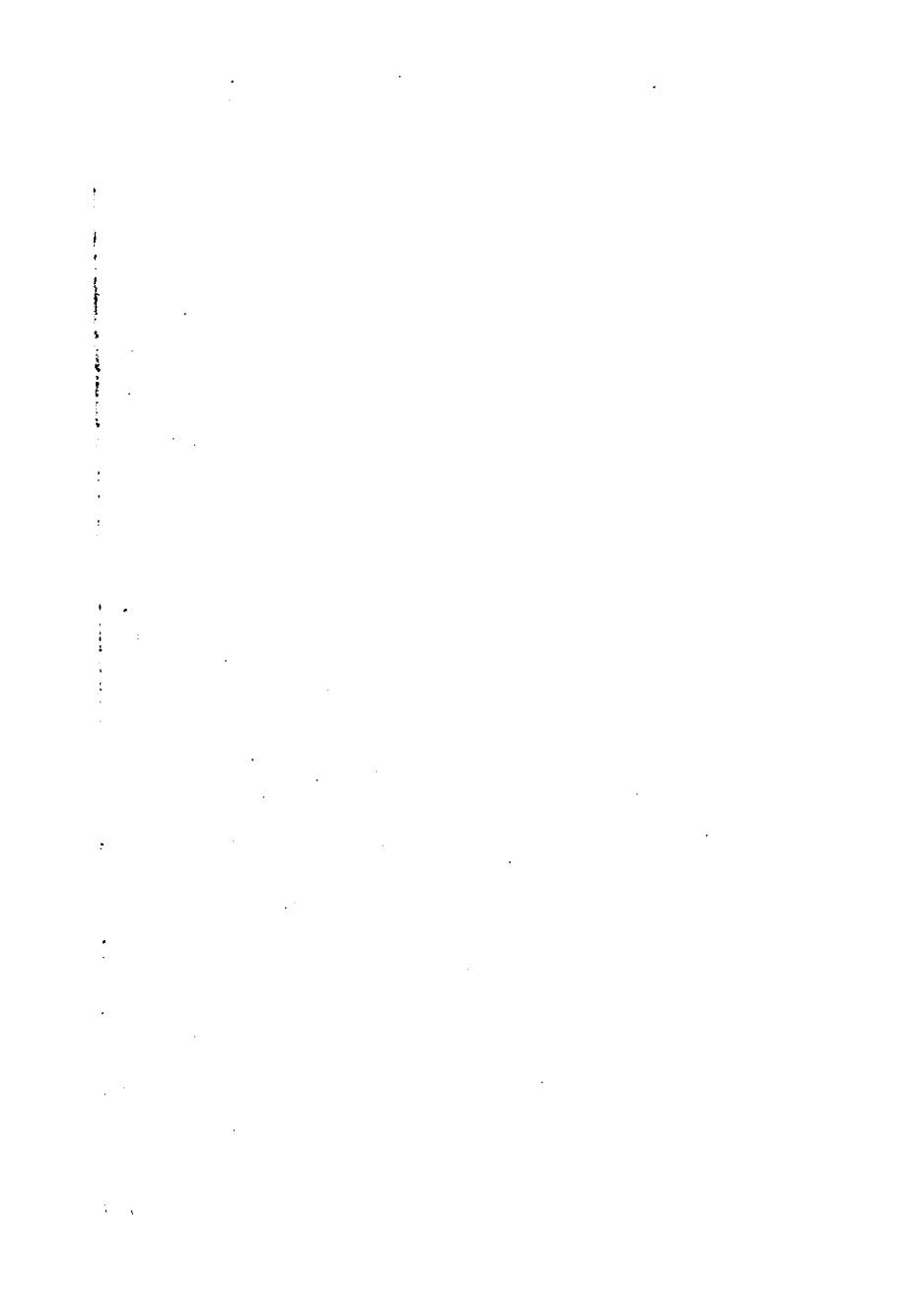
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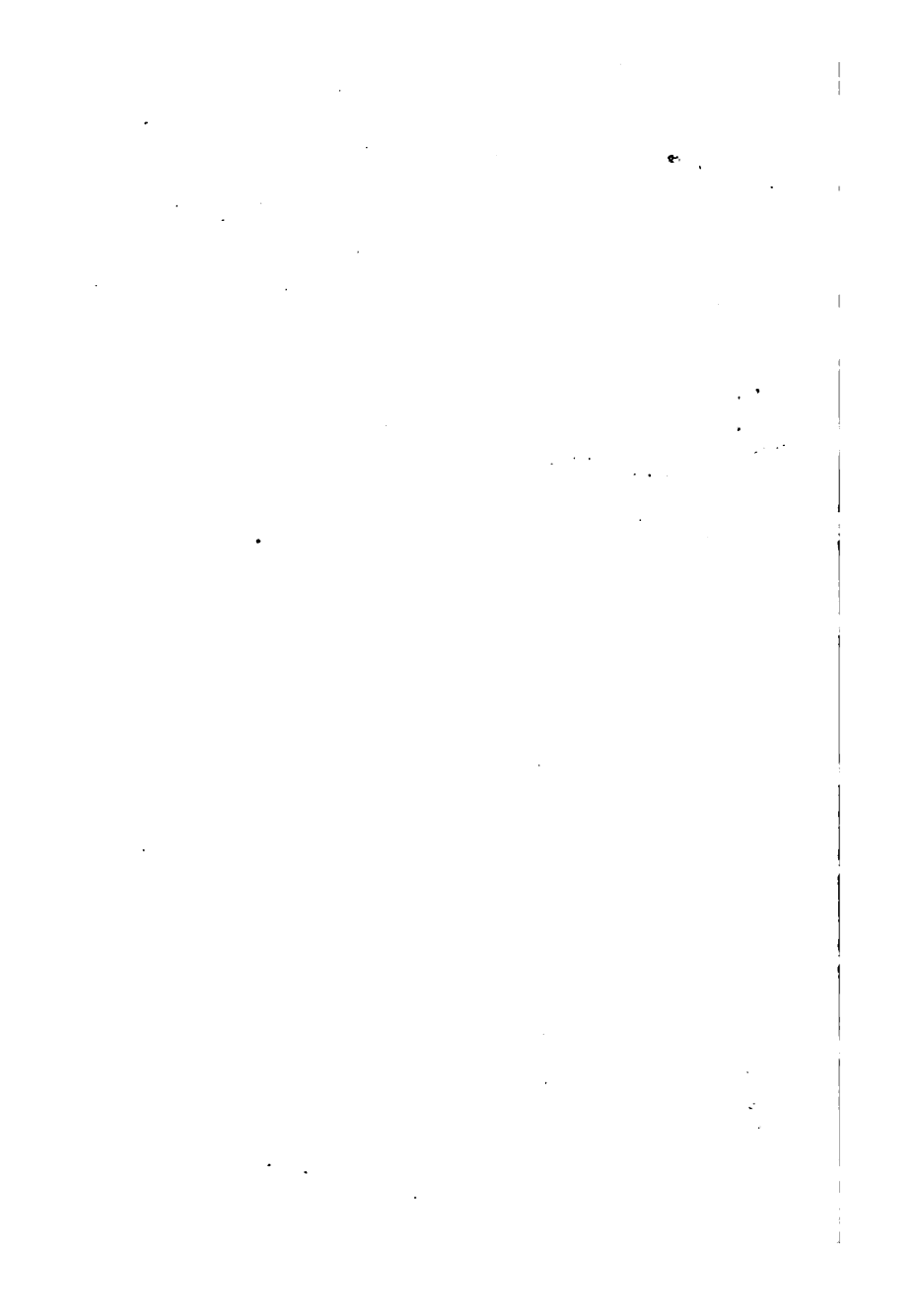


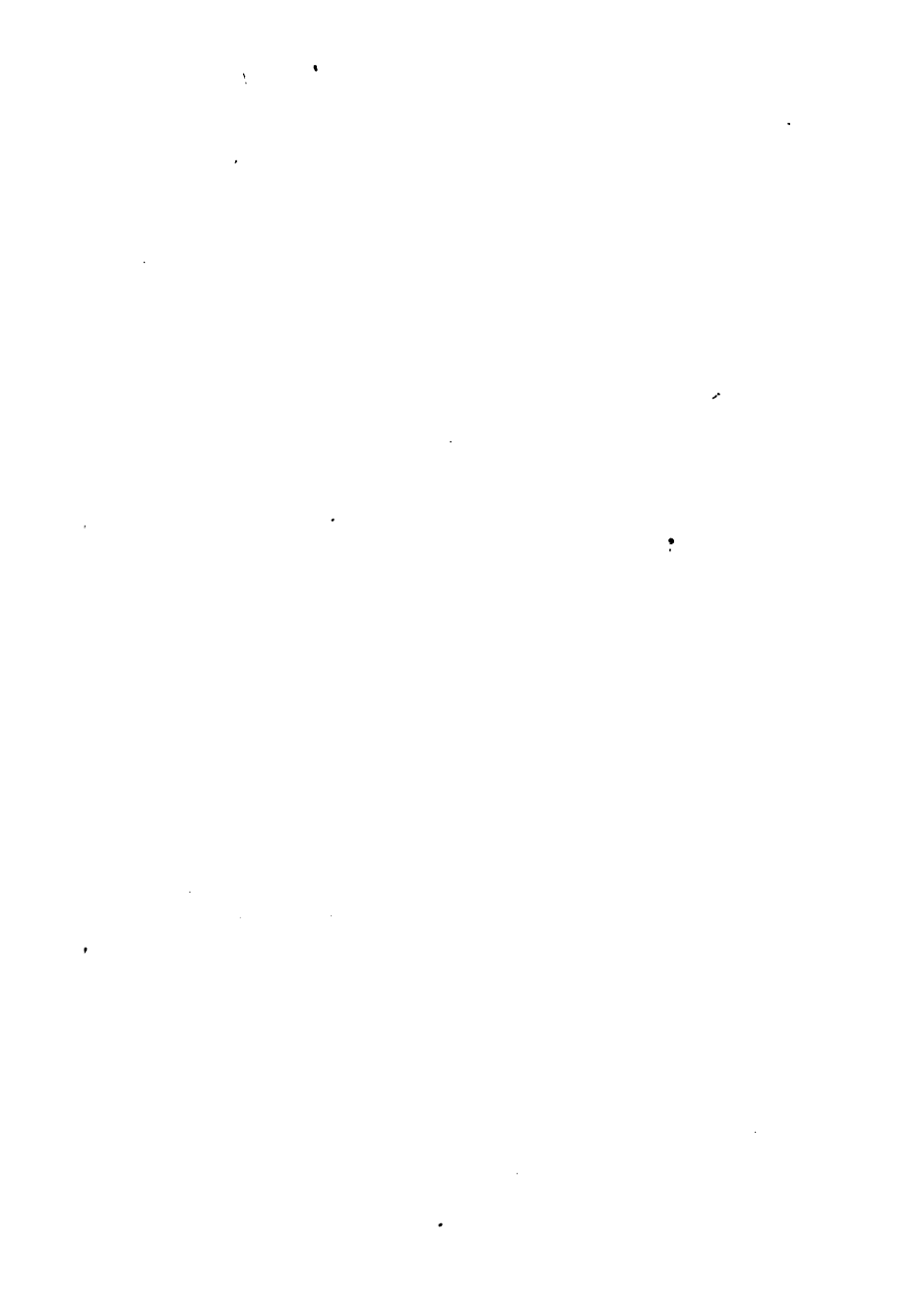
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

(Leisure-Hour Series)

MISTRESS JUDITH

JONATHAN

7. 9. 20. 1
LEISURE-HOUR SERIES

JONATHAN

A NOVEL

Chaplin
C. C. FRASER-TYTLER

BY

AUTHOR OF "MISTRESS JUDITH" ETC.

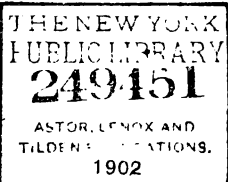
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NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1876

Ex



JONATHAN.

CHAPTER I.

AARON FALK, BREWER.

IT is a quiet May evening, and the chalk road between Hepreth and Shelbourne is colored by the evening sun.

It dips here and there into a cutting, and then ascends again slowly to the top of a gentle hill. Sometimes on such a hill you can see before you—if you have your face towards Hepreth—the steeples and tall chimneys of the little market town, lying snugly in the valley, with a soft haze of thin blue smoke hanging above it. But if you are looking the other way, you will see nothing of Shelbourne, except the chimneys of the Red Inn which stands some way out of the village, at three cross-roads, and from which you have to turn sharp round to the left if you want to find Shelbourne.

The monotony of the long chalk road is broken here and there by an elm wood, that comes down to the road-side, or by a sheet of hyacinths, lying like a blue bay in the heart of the wood. And earlier in the year the copses are carpeted with primroses and violets, and the little children of Shelbourne, with hot hands and dirty white thread, come to pick them and tie them up, and carry them home to their mother, or to Mrs. Myse, or "the minister."

Aaron Falk and his boy Ben Bower often see them, as they pass along in the gig from Hephreth market on Tuesdays. But it is somehow in keeping with the laziness and stillness of this evening that there should be no children in the copses, and that the only sound that breaks the stillness should be the lazy rolling of the gig wheels up the hills that billow this part of the way, and the far-off cawing of busy rooks at a farm half a mile distant.

Aaron Falk is in the gig, holding the reins loosely; Bess the mare is taking her time, going from side to side to make the little hill less, and Ben the boy is walking along whistling behind his master, and flicking the heads off the "lords and ladies" with his whip.

There is one other living thing in the still picture. At the top of a rising mound to which the hyacinths have climbed, a girl's figure is moving among them.



She is gathering the hyacinths in lapsfuls and putting them in her apron.

"I warrant she thinks she's gleaning," said Ben, from the road, looking up at her.

The girl hearing the sound of wheels turned round and smiled broadly.

Ben shook his whip at her. Then Mr. Falk drew up, and told him to get in, for they were at the top of the hill. And Bess the mare struck into a brisk trot, which she kept up till they had turned the corner by the Red Inn, and were close to the school. And the girl among the hyacinths watched them till they were out of sight.

"Take this to Mr. Byles," said Aaron Falk to Ben, stopping at the schoolmaster's gate.

"I've not forgotten it, you see, Mr. Byles," said he, from the gig, as that person appeared at his door, and leant against the post at the entrance.

He was a shambling, cadaverous man, with lanky legs, upon which the trousers of two Mr. Byles's seemed to be hanging—his chest was about a foot across, his cheeks fallen in, his jaw and temple bones protruding, his color mottled; and a look of the most extreme despondency, that was not unnatural, rested on his face and showed itself even in his limbs.

On this warm May evening, he was wrapped round the throat with a red comforter, from which only his

large blue ears and his melancholy face appeared. He held his hand pressed tenderly upon his person, as he answered Mr. Falk in broken sentences—

“I am sure I thank you, Mr. Falk, sir—very kindly. It is a real char—ity, sir,—to such as me. Anything that can alleviate my—symptoms—my lower chest, sir, as you know well, sir, is the seat of my—malady—disease, sir.”

“Yes, I know,” said Aaron, good-naturedly, though he had heard the same sentence, word for word, a thousand times. “I hope the medicine may give you a good night. I shall always be glad to send for or bring anything for you from Hepreth, you know, Mr. Byles. Good-morning.”

And then he drove off, leaving the schoolmaster gazing at his bottle, which he caused to revolve slowly round in his skeleton fingers, and with a half-delivered sentence about his “situation—unfortunate position—aggravated malady,” on his lips.

There could hardly be a greater contrast than the well-to-do, good-looking brewer, and his melancholy dyspeptic friend. And yet, in a way, they were friends. Aaron Falk was naturally kind-hearted, and in his prosperity and freedom from care, he took pity on any neighbor who was oppressed or in trouble. It was well known he was the man to go to if a small loan could save a poor man from being “sold up.”

"Get out here, Ben," said he, when they got into the village, "and take up that to Mr. May. Joe can put up the mare."

Ben, with a large parcel, got down obediently. Mr. Falk turned through a green gate that Ben had opened, and drove up a trim little avenue to his own door. A neat, elderly servant-woman was there to receive him. Joe, the horse-keeper, touching his hat, was at the horse's head in a moment.

"The fish, sir," said Sarah. "I hope you remembered the fish for your dinner."

"Fish? Yes, you will find it in the gig."

Aaron Falk kicked off his boots, and threw himself into the arm-chair to read the *Hepreth Chronicle*.

Sarah had kept up a little fire, though it was not cold, just to make the parlor look cheerful.

And though Mr. Falk was still a bachelor at three-and-thirty, it did look cheerful, far above the average of "parlors." There were plants in the window, and books on the tables. The inevitable square table was not there, filling up the greater part of the room, and allowing only a humble passage round it for the use of the owners of the table. Nor was the inevitable yellow and red cotton table-cloth there; nor the case of wax flowers; nor the pervading smell of whisky, and sherry, and damp biscuits. Mr. Falk

dined in another room, and wrote and read and did his business in this one.

But then it was well known he was a very superior man; a good shot, a first-rate horseman, a cultivated man among his very much less cultivated neighbors. And yet he got on with them all; and the men liked working for him better than for masters who were more like themselves, and who had made their own way into the rank above them.

Mr. Falk's father had been just what he was, and held just such a position in Shelbourne. So had his father before him. And the old men liked to say that they had worked for three Mr. Falks, and "never had no faults to find with none of 'em."

And it was the unquestioned right of Aaron Falk, as of his fathers, to sit at the Board of Guardians, and speak a good word for the poor folk; and to be consulted in all matters, spiritual as well as temporal, that concerned the Shelbourne parish.

CHAPTER II.

SHELBOURNE PLACE.

BEN found that carrying books by a string was not comfortable even to his hard fingers, so he shouldered the parcel and went down the hill which the village street followed, still whistling.

He was a very good boy, Ben; the one son of his mother; he had no cares and no regrets, and he was always well-fed, well-clothed, and well-housed: the latter, because "he was only one instead of bein' a dozen," as his father used to say: so there was room for them to live decently, as few of the other folk could, in overcrowded Shelbourne and the neighboring parishes.

It spoke much—but was it good or ill?—of the condition of the people, that they should be content to stay and overcrowd Shelbourne. There was a proprietor, who never lived there, the owner of three good houses, and as many fine estates. It was no wonder he did not care for the old "Place" at Shelbourne. To the artist it had some beauties: its fine old trees, its once lovely garden, the quiet little pond at the

lodge-gate where the cattle stand whisking their tails through long summer afternoons, and where the swans (that Aaron Falk has given to Mrs. Myse, and that he feeds, because Mr. May cannot afford to keep them) go diving for fish in the clear water among the bright green weed: the little trout stream that runs along in its clean gravel bed from the other side of the village, feeding the pond, and running through under the arched stone bridge to turn a mill and wash clothes for the villagers on the other side: all these are pretty, and sweet to see, but it is not enough for some people. And after all, the squire has perhaps done better with his house than to live in it, for he has given it to Mr. May, the curate, who lives there with his aunt, Mrs. Myse.

Shelbourne is one of those parishes, fortunately now few but still too many, that being in the hands of college consciences, fares badly, and stands still, while all the rest of the world goes on. The great tithes of Shelbourne are four or five hundred a year; the glebe is let; there is no vicarage. The preferment is refused by each Fellow, until the feeblest and most despairing, whoever he may be, seizes the straw and accepts it. A hundred and fifty pounds a year and no house is not a tempting bait, still less is it so when a man is in ill health, and when doctors and railways are alike far off. But out of the hundred and fifty

pounds the new vicar may employ a curate to do his work, and pocket fifty or sixty pounds a year. This curate is Mr. May, and through Mr. Falk's intervention, and because the squire has somewhere a kind corner in his heart, the big empty unfurnished "Shelbourne Place" is put at his disposal.

The little bridge over the pond is the beginning of the approach to the house. It curves round through fields, one sloping down to the water, the other studded with large elms, losing itself in shrubbery to the left of the house. At this part of the grounds, left to itself and nature, like all the rest, such a sea of daffodils comes up in spring that it looks like a little forest; and here the village children are allowed to come and pick them on Saturday afternoons.

Ben goes along the moss-grown approach, and rings the front-door bell. It has become the custom for people to go to the front-door, whatever their errand may be, because Mrs. Myse generally opens it herself; and they don't like the idea of a lady, "let alone Mrs. Myse," coming to the back-door.

The baker and the butcher alone drive round to the back.

"It 'ud never do for strangers to see pervisions goin' in at the front," they agree; though strangers are as rare as comets at Shelbourne Place. "And though she's as 'umble as 'umble, it ain't for us to be

a 'umblin' of her more, and a arrogatin' from her position like."

So the butcher in his bright blue smock, and the baker in his white hat, vie with each other in gallantry to Mrs. Myse. At first she had often held out her apron for the bread, with a gentle smile on her small, sallow face; but Hare, the baker, would no more allow her to carry the bread in than he would allow the squire's wife herself. He takes his hat off, and, with a cheery, respectful "Good-morning, ma'am," lays the two small loaves on the dresser in the kitchen.

"Nothin' more this mornin', ma'am?" he asks every time.

"Nothing more to-day, thank you. I am very much obliged to you, Hare," she answers every time, looking at the loaves all the while, to think how best she can cut them without waste.

After he is gone, she folds her yellow little hands together, and smooths her thin hair streaked with grey.

"They are so good, and kind, and respectful," she says to herself, smiling gently with pleasure. "I am sure people could not be nicer or kinder than they are."

This is the little lady to whom Ben gives the books at the front-door.

"Well, to be sure! *another* kind thought!" she

says, standing in the doorway in her little rusty black dress. "How good of Mr. Falk!"

"They're for the Reverend May I take it," said Ben.

"Yes, yes; it's all right, thank you, Ben. And *most* kind of Mr. Falk it is. Give him Mr. May's and my kind compliments and *best* thanks, Ben; and thank *you, too*, for bringing them. It is a heavy parcel, Ben, and I shall see you again on Sunday, Ben?"

Ben having only arrived at Tuesday, and feeling Sunday-school only just over and behind him, stared a little with a concerned face.

At last he said, collectedly—

"Yes, missus, if I'm spared to live to then."

He looked very much like living, as he stood there with his plump cheeks and big blue eyes. Even Mrs. Myse could see no cause for concern, as he walked off and began whistling again.

She shut the door and went into a large room, where her nephew was sitting at a table, writing by the window—

"Alfred, dear, here are your books from the library. That *good* Mr. Falk has brought them from Hepreth, and just sent them up."

"How very kind," said the curate, laying down his pen, and looking at the backs of the books, a look of quiet pleasure coming into his serene face. "We shall have a very pleasant evening, aunt."

"Yes, dear ;" and she added in an undertone, more to herself than to her nephew, "We generally do have nice evenings."

The evening breeze passed with a shiver through the leaves of the magnolias at the window, and Alfred May coughed.

Mrs. Myse did not wait for another cough, but rose and gently closed it.

She lit the candles and put them on the table by her nephew, and then she took her work and stitched silently in the twilight.

CHAPTER III.

JAEI'S HOME.

MEANTIME, Ben had whistled his way back to the village, but not without company.

"Where've you been, boy?" asked a gruff, but rather high-pitched woman's voice, that he recognized as the voice of Jael Thorne.

She caught him up, and they walked as far as the village green together. There Ben struck off up some stone steps, a short cut to Mr. Falk's gate, and Jael, satisfied as to his business at the Place, kilted her short skirts still higher, and quickened her steps homewards.

She had been "charing" at the Place all day, but her step was as brisk as if she were but beginning her work.

A quaint, sturdy, almost deformed little figure, thick set, with thick legs and thick features, a large battered brown hat on her head, and keen light grey eyes looking out from under it. Such was Jael Thorne, who

looked neither to right nor left as she plodded along.

She followed the main road for at least half a mile beyond the school. Then she turned off at an angle on to the grass, and walked between two hedges, along a sort of natural green lane. But it was deeply cut into old cart-ruts that had hardened, and grown themselves over with grass. And there was a stillness as of the desert all around: neither beast, bird, nor man seemed to have their habitation there, nor was any trace of them to be seen.

But where the rough green lane ends suddenly at a hedge and a field, there is a clump of orchard trees standing; and canopied over by these trees, so that it cannot be seen until you face it, and to the left as you go up the lane, is the tiniest of cottages, a door at one side, a tiny window on the other, and a low thatch reaching down to the doorway.

Even Jael has to stoop as she goes in.

"Fa'der!" she calls from the foot of a little ladder that loses itself somewhere above in darkness, "be 'Scilla come in?"

A thin feeble voice answered in the negative.

Jael made a gesture of impatience as she began "setting the room straight."

"Hed yer cup o' tea, father?" she called up again presently.

The answer again was "No."

Jael shrugged her high shoulders and began to rake up the smouldering fire, blowing upon it lustily as she leant upon her hard brown hands before it.

The door opened softly behind her, and a girl came in.

"Well—*whatever in the name of patience,*" said Jael, still resting on her hands, but looking over her shoulder while she emphasised each word, "'ave ye been arter *to-day*?"

"Don't blow 'er up, missus," said a young man who had followed the girl into the room, and was now laying stacks of hyacinths upon the table. "I've been and seen arter 'er, and brought them flowers home for 'er. She's on'y been in the copse agin the road a-picking these."

Priscilla stood smiling in the middle of the room.

"Get some sticks, can't 'e?" said her mother, crossly, "and don't stand doin' nothin' now ye're come."

Priscilla went out to get some sticks.

"Don't blow 'er up, missus!" said the young man again, pleadingly.

"Andrew, you don't know what it is," she answered, "to have a child born to you as isn't no more use than the child unborn, and to keep it and look arter it as well, which you needn't do for the other. And

me that poor, Andrew—and father a lying up there—and some 'un must arn the livin'. And go on the parish I won't, Andrew, not if I should know the wants o' bread. It's no use flying in the Lord's face, I know it ain't; but I can't help a fretting now and again, I can't, and giving her a bit o' my mind."

"She's very quiet and good, missus," said Andrew, after a little. The fire that was burning up showed that his face was troubled. "She's not wild, like many girls that go astray, and al'ays in mischief. She ain't much use in the home, I know," he said, looking down, and rubbing his foot gently on the stones, while a shade of sadness came into his voice; "but she's as innocent as any child, she is, missus, and such pretty ways with her."

"Sit down and have a cup o' tea, Andrew," said Jael, "now it's made. Ye're a good lad to bring my gal in, and I thank 'ee kindly. She's my gal, whatever she is, and I can't get rid o' frettin' and o' carin' for her—I wish I could. It 'ud be a deal better for me, it 'ud."

They sat down together at the table, on which a little lamp that Jael had trimmed was burning.

Jael poured out the weak tea into four cups, and, taking one in her hand, began climbing up the steep ladder.

While her heavy foot tramped overhead, Priscilla sat smiling at Andrew and the hyacinths.

"'Scilla," said he, taking her hand tenderly, and enclosing it between his own large brown ones, "ye'll try and help th' mother a little with the work and that, won't you, to-morrow? Give the old gen'leman his tea and that?"

Priscilla nodded, and lisped out, "Yes."

"And don't stay out arter dark, 'Scilla, will ye? Ye'll remember that, for the sake o' me?"

She said "Yes" again. But she was taking up the hyacinths, and dropping them between her slender fingers all the time, and he had little hope that she would heed him.

When Jael tramped down the ladder again, Andrew had his hand still in Priscilla's on the table; and he was looking in the girl's face with an expression that Jael never forgot.

It brought the tears into her eyes then, that she had to turn away to wipe them, before she could sit down to her well-earned meal.

Jael made a point of never staying at the Place for a third meal when she went there as charwoman.

"I must see if 'Scilla's in," she would say to Mrs. Myse, who pressed her to remain, "and I don't like her to be out arter dark."

And that was true. But it was also true that Jael,

the poor charwoman, would not touch more food than she could go without, in the house where she knew poverty had set its seal.

“And a big house don’t go to fill ye,” she would say, “no more than a thatched roof. Want o’ bread’s want o’ bread, wherever it is.”

CHAPTER IV.

JAEI'S STORY.

"YOU'D best be goin', Andrew, though no offence," said Jael, bluntly, when she had washed up the cups and made Priscilla arrange them in the little corner cupboard on the wall.

"Very well, missus," he answered obediently, making his way to the low door, and looking at Priscilla as he went.

"Come again, lad, whenever it takes your mind," she called after him, repenting. "He's a good lad as ever handled spade, he is; and if there was more o' that sort there'd be less o' doin' wrong and more folks livin' as they should." And Jael sighed as she stumped about the tiny room, settling the chairs in their places, while Priscilla stood up, tall and pretty, by the fire, looking into it.

Jael Thorne was a rough woman. Even her sigh was rough, like a gust of wind in winter. But perhaps it meant more than the sigh of most people. Certainly it meant more than the little soft child-sigh

of pretty Priscilla, that said nothing more than "it is bed-time," if it said as much.

Jael had a history : that sad history that belongs to so many women of her class. She had been loved, as she thought. Plain, ungainly, and free-spoken as she was, some one had been found to love her ; at least he said he loved her, and Jael, who was true, believed him. Then came the old story of the broken promise, and after that the birth of the hapless child.

A beautiful little child : its strange beauty almost mocking the broken-hearted ugly woman that had borne it. But that the mother had suffered, and suffered terribly, was shown only too soon. Priscilla, with her beauty, was almost witless—" simple," as the villagers in their homely way expressed it.

But Jael was happier now than she had been for many years. 'Scilla's beauty and 'Scilla's little wit had pressed sorely upon the tender heart she carried under a rough disguise. "It was the Lord's judgment for her sin," she said to herself—and she did not know which she deemed the greater curse—the slow wit or the bright beauty. But now a bright hope was dawning. The beauty she had almost prayed the Lord to take away, had turned out a blessing. For did not Andrew, the best of lads, one of the two men in the parish against whom not even village slander had ever lifted a voice—had he not been brought to look with

favor on Priscilla? And Andrew's love, when he gave it, would be pure and noble, said Jael: poor Jael, whose faith in men had been so sorely shaken.

"Get 'e to bed, 'Scilla," she said, taking a broken candlestick with a bit of smeared black candle in it, and lighting it at the fire; and the girl took it and began climbing the ladder. Jael, kicking the embers apart with her foot, that they might die out the sooner, followed her more slowly.

One little room opened off the tiny bit of landing. Two large beds filled up nearly all the space. There was room for Priscilla to pass between them to set the flaming candle on a rickety chest of drawers.

The light fell upon the bed nearest the door, and upon the placid handsome face of a very old man. His almost bald head was finely formed, his nose large and aquiline. His eyes, that were now sunken from age, were still keen and intelligent. He watched the women silently and happily as they moved about: just as a pleased child might do that wakes to find the nurse or mother coming to bed at last.

Jael came up to the bed.

"Been a-sleepin' yet, fa'der?"

"No, no—not sleepin'," he answered thickly. Priscilla was sitting on the bed in which she and her mother slept. She had begun taking the handkerchief

off her neck, and her dark hair had fallen to her waist.

"'Scilla," said Jael, sharply, "put out the light before 'e undress. Grandfa'der's wakin', and you've *never* put the curtain up again, 'Scilla."

Priscilla blew out the candle, and the mother and daughter, groping in the dark, took off their poor clothes and found their way between the worn blankets, where sleep soon hushed them into forgetfulness. Past sins, Andrew, the hyacinths, the curtain, melted away in a rest that was too still and deep for dreaming.

Consciences without stain have very few of us. Lovers have fewer still. Little crowded hovels and thinly covered beds are the portion of too many.

But sleep, at least, we all have. In this sense we are not God-forgotten: rather we are His beloved. He giveth His beloved sleep.

Josiah Thorne, the aged, was the first in the garret to awake. He saw the first pink streak of the May dawn flushing the sky, the shiver of the morning breeze through the elm against his window. And he moved his poor stiff limbs unconsciously, thinking it was the hour for watering the horses at Mr. Falk's farm; and in his dull ears the crowing of the cock sounded, though Jael's snore did not reach him. The cows were lowing gently in the meadow: he said over their names softly to himself as he lay blinking his eyes at

the growing light—Daisy, Mopsey, Green Pea, Lady—all the old names he had known so well. Was not that the master's voice calling him from the yard? He turned his feeble head and listened.

But his eyes fell on the rickety chest of drawers, and the broken candlestick, and on the forms of the two women, asleep on their poor bed in the corner. And then Josiah Thorne remembered how it all was; that Mr. Falk's farm was a thing of thirty years ago, that the old master's voice would never again call him.

"And if so be as he called I couldn't go," said the old man shaking his head sadly, and the childish tears welled into his eyes, and flowed over his thin sunken cheeks.

Ninety years old; and still there, to wake, to weep, and to remember.

CHAPTER V.

JONATHAN.

AARON FALK'S house was a picture all the year round. It stood on the rising ground opposite the Place, and looking down upon the pond and the snow-white swans, the little arched bridge, where the honeysuckle and ivy tumbled in great wreaths and festoons over the clear water as if they loved looking at their own beautiful faces, and on the great elms that studded the park.

Some of these elms looked into the water too. But they looked into it at full length, majestically, leaf for leaf mirrored in its still heart; and between were the blue bays of sky, past which the moon went like another face; but, more majestic even than the elm-trees, looking not at all at herself; but having high thoughts, being even nearer God than they.

And in May, Aaron Falk's house, that looked down upon the water, wore a veil of Banksia roses, from base to roof. Clusters of the pale yellow flowers were crowded together in such profusion that the birds that had built in it earlier in the year, when only the

fresh foliage was there, could hardly find their nests. And in the garden were bright patches of forget-me-not and crimson daisies, dark-faced pansies and wall-flowers. Aaron Falk was a gardener himself, and cared for all these things. He would have missed a bloom that any one had cut in his garden; but he cut and gave away his flowers, generously himself. Mrs. Myse, with her neglected, barren, weed-grown garden, could testify to this. Never a week passed, from May to October, that Mr. Falk did not either take or send a bunch of flowers to the Place.

And then he had a little conservatory built on to his house. That was the pride and delight of several people in Shelbourne; for it had been built by a Shelbourne man, and a young man too. If we say that the person who was most proud of it was the mother of one Jonathan, we need hardly add that Jonathan was the builder.

Jonathan himself had an honest pride in his bit of work; for it was not in his line of business, and yet it was everywhere conceded that he had made "a rare job of it." But then Jonathan did most things well. He had the knack of hitting the right nail on the head.

And yet he was not a rising man. Shelbourne was not a place to rise in; and Jonathan stayed on in Shelbourne.

It was to his home that Andrew turned in when he reached the village that May evening, after seeing Priscilla safely housed and restored to her mother.

"Is Jonathan in, if you please, missus?" he asked, looking in at the door.

A meek little woman of between fifty and sixty was sitting sewing at the table, mending a corduroy coat.

She looked up with a gentle smile when she saw Andrew, and answered, "You must come a little nigher, Andrew; I'm terrible dull o' hearing to-night."

Then guessing at what he wanted, she said—

"Jonathan's not at home, but I think you'll meet him if you go by the school—he was to do somethin' for schoolmaster, I take it—somethin' in the garden, or that. It's there you'll happen on him, Andrew."

Her voice and face were so patient and sweet as she looked up and spoke, one could hardly tell which were the sweetest. A small regular face it was, the grey hair smoothed down on each side of a rather wide forehead, a straight small nose, a straight sweet mouth, and grey eyes set rather far apart, that carried with them a look of such mixed truth and tenderness as it is difficult to describe—such was Jonathan's mother.

Bent over the fire was a small thin man, with a very hard pale face. He kept his slouch hat on, and was stretching his hands over the flame.

"He's always cold, he is," said his wife, looking at

him compassionately. He took no notice, but if anything the hard mouth closed a little tighter, as if he hated pity.

"I'll be goin' arter Jonathan, then," said Andrew.
"Good-night, missus."

"Good-night, Andrew."

The door closed, and Andrew's steps died in the distance.

"Do you feel sadly, Jonathan?" asked the wife presently, looking up anxiously from the corduroy jacket before her, and passing her hand over her tired eyes, from which she had taken her spectacles.

The man moved his foot impatiently, changed his attitude and rested his chin on his hand, while he still stared into the fire. He made some sort of sound, but it did not reach the dull ears of his wife.

She was used to it. She only rubbed her spectacles with the corner of her apron, snuffed the candle, and drew it a little nearer, blinked a little at the bright light, then sighed, and went on patching at her son's jacket.

Andrew, going further up the village, turned in at Mr. Byles's gate. Jonathan was working there in the twilight.

"What are you arter?" asked Andrew.

"Mr. Byles asked me to see after these roses," said

Jonathan ; "it's by half too late now, but I ought to have thought o' them before."

"He won't live to see 'em bloom, not he," said Andrew.

"Well, if he don't some one will. It's a pity a rose shouldn't be a rose, isn't it?"

"I don' know nothin' about such things," answered his friend. "And I'd like it better if so be as you hadn't so much o' such jobs to do. You could do better with your time, you could."

Jonathan went on working. After a little he said—

"Have you been after anything to-night, or have you been idling, eh?"

If it had not been too dark Andrew would have seen a quiet twinkle in Jonathan's eye. He was sure it was there, and he resented it as much as he could resent anything Jonathan said or did.

"That's my business, not your'n."

"But you found fault with *my* business," Jonathan answered good-naturedly.

"It ain't your business. If it was, I'd be the last to speak agin it. I finds fault because you're contrairy like, always goin' agin your luck. You're coming home and stoppin' here and that. It's all o' one piece."

By this time Jonathan had done his work, and

was walking down the road with Andrew. He never answered in a hurry; he was never easily roused when he himself was attacked or made the subject of discussion. But he said after a few minutes—

“I’ve never repented comin’ home, that I know of.”

“I know you’ve been dull by reason of it many a time,” said Andrew.

“May be,” said Jonathan; “that’s a different thing.”

Andrew said he could not understand that. Jonathan did not try to explain it to him, being a man of very few words, as we have said, where he himself was concerned.

But I think they both saw and understood quite plainly what has been called of late Christ’s Secret. We are all called upon sooner or later to understand it; but some are more backward than others in answering to the call.

Jonathan walked home with his friend’s arm, as they had done together many and many nights, ever since they had been school lads smarting under Mr. Byles’s cane.

The Place glimmered white through the elm trees—the light in Mr. Falk’s kitchen and parlor windows burnt bright at the end of the village, just as they had done these many years. But to the young men change had come. One had learnt the secret of self-re-

nouncement. In the heart of the other had grown up a deep, strong love.

And though they were friends, and though they walked and talked together, neither of them spoke quite openly of these changes. Each wondered at the other, and each forebore to give the other pain.

Perhaps the wonder that Jonathan felt at Andrew's love for witless Priscilla, was exceeded by Andrew's wonder at the love of Jonathan for his father, when they reached his home, and the sweet little grey mother, opening the door at the sound of their footsteps, showed the pale hard-featured man still cowering dumbly over the fire, without a look or word of greeting for his son.

It was for this, was it, that the prosperous ambitious mechanic, Jonathan Cleare, had given up all his chances of fame and fortune, after a two years' absence from Shelbourne, and returned to the old humble home and anvil, and the old humdrum village life?

No wonder if Jonathan sometimes looked "dull," as Andrew said.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. BYLES'S WASHING-DAY.

IT was a very humdrum life in Shelbourne, certainly, in spite of its beauty. But then the very seasons to some people are humdrum, and life must to them be monotonous anywhere.

The simple village folk are wiser, however. Without knowing it, they have attained to the true philosophy of life and of the Bible. To whatsoever state they are called, they are, for the most part, therewith content. Sometimes they are too content, so long have they been schooled in the school of adversity. We wish we could raise them to a discontent with some of the unnecessary and degrading hardships they suffer. When a man comes to lie down peacefully eleven in a room, it speaks of something less admirable than resignation.

And after all, monotony, like happiness, is relative. May Day, Guy Fawkes' Day, the giving out of the Coal-club were as exciting events in Shelbourne as Ascot or the opening of Parliament elsewhere.

Mr. May, Mrs. Myse, Mr. Falk, Mr. Byles were

great magnates, whose movements must always afford food for conversation. And Mr. Byles's health was at this time in that state of uncertainty which keeps the public mind in an attitude of pleasing suspense.

"He can't live not long, poor dear." "He's very near his account, he is." "I count he won't see Michaelmas." Such were the conjectures that had been made over the poor schoolmaster's head for many years. But hitherto nothing had happened. Village life, like the seasons, had slipped monotonously by.

But the monotony of the seasons is the monotony of true poetry; and village hearts, as well as others, beat, though unconsciously, to the beautiful cadence.

Jael thought June very beautiful when May had slipped by, and she saw the roses in Mr. Falk's garden peeping over the hedge, sunning themselves on the wall, rambling over the pillars at the Place; and, with the simple maidenly faces of the dog-rose kind, looking even out of the high hedges of the lane leading to her quaint little home.

She thought July beautiful, too, when the trees bent under the weight of foliage, and the sky was so cloudlessly blue, and Jonathan's garden on a small scale, and Aaron Falk's on a large scale, blazed with summer flowers at the height of their beauty. Jonathan's garden was always a daughter of Mr. Falk's garden;

for all the flowers that were to spare he made over to Jonathan ; and the sweet little grey mother, Mrs. Cleare, looked out at them and felt happy. It had been a great blessing to her getting her son home ; yet she often cried thinking of it, and of all he had given up for the sake of his father and her.

It was as beautiful a day as ever Jael had seen, one early August morning, when she gave her father his breakfast, and was off betimes to Mr. Byles's to wash.

Mr. Byles hated women ; but he needed clean linen, like other people, and so washed his linen must be. But Mr. Byles had an expedient for getting rid of washing and women as fast as possible. He got the two handiest, hardest-working women in the parish, and gave them two days at it every fortnight. These two women were Jael Thorne and Andrew's mother, Martha Male.

So it was to meet her colleague that Jael went forth this fine August morning. And if ever Mr. Byles had made a good hit in his life, he did it when he chose his washer-women.

Out with the soap, up with the sleeves ; out with the wash-trays, or with the great kettle—it was all in train in a moment. Then they planted themselves opposite each other. Jael, short, wiry, and brown, the old battered brown hat upon her head with its faded pink

ribbon, the short full brown skirt on her ample waist, and the great faded apron over it ; a pair of wiry brown hands and arms were in the soap-suds, and Mr. Byles's shirts were bobbing up and down, swelling out in a balloon in the steam, and being kneaded, beaten, suppressed, continually.

Then came the second pair of arms, but not brown and small—large, plump, white, and strong ; the spotless sleeves of the spotless print gown turned up and pinned at the shoulders ; a neat handkerchief round her ample throat, a hat like Jael's, but black, neat, in thoroughly good repair, trimmed with a neat purple ribbon. Everything exquisitely clean and trim ; such was Martha Male, Andrew's mother. The story of the two women was written on their persons if not in their faces ; but I think it was there as well. Jael, the fallen, ill-used girl of long ago, grown up to the fight of life and for daily bread without any one to depend on, though two depended on her ; without any one to look clean and smart for, without any respected husband's name to fall back upon, to be proud of, and without the means of making herself more than cleanly ragged, if she wished it. Martha Male, the healthy, comfortable matron, with a husband comfortably in work, a steady hard-working son, and two married daughters—surely the difference was written in her

plump, kind face, as she too fell to pummelling Mr. Byles's linen.

Swish, swish—bang, bang—more soap, more suds, more water—then the crying of the squeezed linen, as Mrs. Male's powerful hands wrung it, and the little trickles of water fell on the froth of suds and made holes in it, like the rain on snow in thaw.

"Proper dirty *this* is," said Jael, holding up a duster and looking at it fiercely from a professional point of view.

"Mostly is, is dusters," said Mrs. Male, laconically.

"It 'ud be bad days for such as me if folks didn't make a muck o' things o' times," said Jael, having at the duster again hotly.

The great kettle again ; more hot water and clouds of steam. Then a foot, slow and shuffling, was heard in the inner room.

"Mr. Byles—that's he," said Mrs. Male.

There being no one else in the house, this was too self-evident a proposition to require any reply. Sundry coughings and dismal wheezings followed, quite confirming the identity of the person in question.

"We won't have *this* job long, I take it," said Jael, shaking her head over a refractory shirt that refused to take the wet all over, and started up obstreperously into air-balloons.

Martha Male laid down the piece of soap she

held, on the table, and, forgetting herself so far as to wipe her hands on her clean Hessian apron, she stared at Jael with an expression of awe and terror.

"Whatever in the name o' goodness is it?" asked Jael.

Martha Male pointed with her plump forefinger at the wet piece of soap while she kept the other hand rolled in her apron.

"Jael Thorne," she said, solemnly, "if somethink doesn't happen what's bad and unlucky, I'm a worse woman than I thought. That's three times as that very particular piece of soap 's slipped through my hands this blessed mornin'. And if nothin' doesn't come o' that I'm——"

Mr. Byles coughed in the next room, and Mrs. Male, stopping short, wagged her head knowingly at Jael, as much as to say, "I told you!"

"That means you'll be sent for," said her colleague, who was matter-of-fact, very. "And if it's Byles as anythink's to come to, you won't be sent for, by means there ain't nobody to send, nor yet no occashin for sendin'. Because, if I sees right, as I take it I do, you're here large as life, and all ready."

"It's all very well for you to be so saucy," said Mrs. Male, shaking her head, and looking hurt and dignified; "but soap never slipped with *me*, as some-think didn't come of it. I wouldn't give half-a-sove-

reign in shillin's and sixpences for Mr. Byles's life, not arter this !"

" Please yourself," said Jael. " No one won't ask you, that's sartin. If some folks could change with some other folks, it 'ud be a deal better for me."

This favorite conclusion of Jael's had such a roll of rhetoric about it, it always silenced Martha Male.

CHAPTER VII.

AN EVENT AT LAST.

MARTHA MALE and Jael were sitting down to "lunch" at eleven o'clock, in Mr. Byles's kitchen, with boiled hands and large appetites, when a loud rap was heard at the door.

"Whatever in the name o' goodness—" began Jael.

Martha Male, turning a little white, still had presence of mind to wag her head again, as much as to say "*I told you !*"

Poor woman! in another moment it was more than a superstitious fear that paled her cheeks. The sick heart-faintness of evil tidings had come to her, and smitten in an instant by the mysterious power that, laying its hand upon the soul, unnerves the body, she was leaning white and trembling upon Jael's shoulder.

"O Jael, Jael, what *shall* I do?" she moaned, while about the door a group of women had gathered, and the news went to and fro like wildfire that Andrew had "got a mischief."

"Poor dear !" said Jael, "take this beer, 'cause you've not tasted nothink, and then come and see arter him."

She roused herself at the thought of being of use to her boy, and followed Jael with trembling, hurried steps out of the house.

"Poor dear!" said the women as she passed them, one or two wiping their eyes, some holding their babies, and staring at her, but all feeling sorry for her in their own way.

"He's in Jonathan Cleare's house," said one woman to Jael. "They've took him there."

"Oh, I think he *did* look bad," said one.

"He don't look like ever comin' round agin," said another.

"That's just the way my boy Tim went," said a third. "He got a mischief, and were gone afore mornin', wern't he, Mary?"

Mr. May was very quickly at the Cleares' house. He was always sent for in times of trouble. Behind him more slowly came Mrs. Myse, who had had to put on her old black bonnet and thin cloak before coming out.

"This is a bad job," he said to the group of gossipers at the gate.

"That it is, sir," said a chorus of voices. "We all know it is bad to come by a mischief, it is. He did look proper bad, did Andrew; he ain't like to get by it, I count."

Mr. May was used to the dismal tone of the Shel-

bourne public on such occasions, and went into the cottage without saying more.

It is always a very sad thing to see a young strong man struck down by suffering, and become in an instant as helpless as a child. It was very sad to see honest Andrew flat on his back on Jonathan's bed, the tears streaming down his cheeks from sheer physical suffering, and his poor mother crying beside him, while they waited for the doctor. Jonathan was gone for him.

Mr. May thought it would be much better to send Andrew to the hospital. They could get him to Hephreth in half the time they would have to wait for a doctor to come from there. And Andrew thought it would be better too, knowing that his strong mother had very little nerve or self-control, for all she was "so big and lusty," as folk said.

So Mr. Falk lent a horse, and another farmer a cart, and Jonathan and Mr. May laid a mattress in it.

And then Jonathan came up to his bed on which Andrew was lying, and said—

"Can you bear for me to lift you, 'Drew lad?"

Andrew lifted his honest eyes beseechingly to Jonathan's face. The look said—"Don't hurt me, Jonathan; I'm quite in your power." He didn't say anything, but his lip quivered.

Jonathan put his strong arms under his friend, and

carried him as tenderly as if he had been a little child. Mr. May walked in front, supporting the leg that was broken.

Then several men lifted him into the cart, and Mrs. Myse and the village nurse put a pillow under his head, and a wet handkerchief on his heated forehead.

Poor Mrs. Male, trembling and useless, must still go with him.

"And so I'd best go with her," said Jael, pulling her sleeves down, and flinging the great tears from her eyes. Next to 'Scilla and her father, there was no one she loved so well as Andrew.

But Mrs. Male fainted before she got into the cart, and had to be carried back to the house; so there was no need for Jael, and Jonathan alone undertook the charge of Andrew. He opened a great umbrella, and hoisting himself on the edge of the cart, held it over Andrew all the way.

Now and then he replaced the wet cloth on his forehead; once, when he got near the hospital, he dried the tears off Andrew's face.

"Thank you, Jonathan," he said, feebly. There was more difficulty in getting Andrew out, than in lifting him into the cart, for the hospital had a yard and big gates, and no one was near who could help Jonathan.

It was then, when on moving his friend gently, Andrew opened his tearful eyes again and moaned, that Jonathan's heart failed him.

He turned away.

Afterwards, plucking up his courage, he went back, lifted Andrew, mattress and all, and laid him inside the gates.

And then help came; but when they had got into the large ward, with flowers on the table and the strong smell of disinfectants and soap in the air, the surgeon saw that the big, dark man who had brought in the patient was almost as much in need of brandy as was Andrew.

But he recovered very quickly. And it was he who helped the nurse and surgeon to undress Andrew, and who stood beside him while the leg was set.

"He'll want a change of linen: I suppose you forgot that," said the kind, motherly nurse.

"I've just thought upon it," said Jonathan. "I'll bring them back to-night."

"Or to-morrow would do," said the nurse. "But you had better take these with you."

She made his clothes into a bundle, tied them in a cloth, and gave them to Jonathan.

"You're a bit easier now?" asked he before he turned to go, looking concernedly at his friend's white

face and closed eyes. "Is there anything I can say to any of them?"

"Tell mother I'll be better soon, and let 'Sc——"

"Yes, I'll let 'Scilla know," said Jonathan, and went out on tiptoe on his hobnails with the bundle under his arm.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT PRISCILLA SAID.

JONATHAN got out of the cart at the Males' door. "I left him comfortable, as far as he could be," said he to tearful Mrs. Male. "They'd set the leg, and that, and put it in a cradle. The doctor says he must have pain for a while, but that's no wonder."

"Oh! Jonathan, my boy," she said, holding her hands over her massive person, "I'm all of a totter and a tremble. I think I did feel bad when they come to tell me; but when I come in over the door, and see the dear poor creature a-lyin' there on that there bed o' yourn, I thought that die I must. It took me so here," she went on, holding her heart, "I never thought that live I could."

"You'd best think of sayin' a word o' thanks to Jonathan, as has fetched him to the hospital," suggested her husband, who was dry-eyed, but very troubled and anxious, walking up and down the little room.

"But dearie me, Abraham," said his wife, "it's very well for you to take it so easy, but if you'd have been in my shoes, terrified and come over, you'd have been

too. To see 'Drew a-lyin'—and them poor trousers o' his as I mended last week all torn to rags about the knee where the horse kicked him, and that stained with blood, you'd have thought his nose had bled at the wust it ever is. And to see his shirt as Jonathan's fetched home!" And as she began opening the parcel she broke off into a violent fit of weeping.

Abraham Male got up, opened a drawer, and put the clothes into it. He shut it again decisively, and placed the kettle on the fire, settling it sturdily between the sticks.

Jonathan helped him to rake up the coals into a flame.

"There's nothin' like a cup o' tea for them women," said Mr. Male, under cover of his wife's sobs. "It sets them on their legs agin. It's wonderful."

Abraham, who had been sent for to hear the bad tidings of his son's accident, was too late to see him start for the hospital, but he was too much troubled to go back again to his work, and he did not like to leave his wife in such misery.

"I'd go in to see the boy, and willin', and take his change o' clothes," he said to Jonathan; "but I don't like for to leave the missus, she do take on so."

"And I'm a better man than you, master," said Jonathan, watching Mrs. Male while she tied up the

clean clothes in a red handkerchief, and knotted the ends together.

"And you'll have to walk all the way, Jonathan," she said. The cup of tea had made her much better, and her kind heart was full of gratitude.

"That's easy done, missus," said Jonathan; and wishing them good afternoon he went out of the house.

"You'll call in when you come back?" Martha shouted after him, and her voice had got back to its natural tone.

"Trust Jonathan for that," said Abraham, eating his bread and butter, and sipping his colorless tea at the table.

Mrs. Male was watching the man that was so soon to set eyes on Andrew, from the window.

"Gracious me, whatever makes him take that road? He ain't agoin' straight towards Hepreth."

Jonathan, as Abraham said, knew his business. He was taking a short cut to Josiah Thorne's house, or rather to the long lane, which was the only path to it.

He had not forgotten his promise to Andrew. Priscilla might be at home; it was not likely, but he would give it the chance, and then it would please Andrew to hear about her.

"Would she care?" asked Jonathan as he trudged along. He very much doubted it.

There was here and there a yellow leaf in the high hedges that threw their tall shadow over the ruddy green lane, and here and there a red May-berry. The sun was already sloping toward the west, behind the steeple of Shelbourne Church. Now and then, with a whirr, Mr. Falk's or the Squire's partridges rose in the fields on either side the lane, disturbed by the unwonted sound of footsteps.

Jonathan wondered—as he drew near the orchard where he knew the Thornes' little home was buried, and saw the brambles climbing over the apple-trees, the bindweed and bryony tangled together over the broken fence, and the gate half off its hinges, looking out tipsily into the lane—how such a place and Andrew should have much to do with each other. He wondered on, when he saw Jael's torn skirt hanging on the wall opposite the little crooked window, and thought of Jael, as he had seen her that morning, in the battered brown hat, with the brown face and keen eyes looking out under it. Not that he despised Jael—he had a very warm corner in his heart for her, for he pitied her, and in many ways he could not help respecting her. Mr. May would have told you the same about Jael any day.

But order, and neatness, and comfort were the prevailing features in Andrew's home. Everything was

respectable and respected, and, in a simple way, just as it should be.

Here everything was anyhow. Sometimes the rooms were swept and clean—sometimes they were not. It depended upon whether Jael was busy or not. Priscilla tried to clean up sometimes, but she did not seem fitted for it. She herself always looked clean and pretty, but her hands were too white and long for scrubbing and such coarse work. It was whispered that Priscilla's father had rare old blood in him; and it needed something to account for her beauty and refinement, when compared with the other village girls. But of this Priscilla herself knew nothing. To her strange, childish mind it had never occurred that her mother bore her maiden name, and seldom, if ever, spoke of her father. And there was the less wonder, since Jael was always called "Jael," and nothing more.

It was well known that if there was anything that Jael wished to guard against, it was this—that Priscilla should ever learn the story of her birth.

And Jael, though she was plain-spoken, had made no enemies. Few cared to speak to Priscilla at all, though all liked to look at her: they thought her too witless to be much noticed; and fewer still would have wished to tell her the story of her mother's fall.

Shelbourne, in this respect, had a much higher tone

than many parishes. Morality, alas! has too often much to do with fashion; and it was not the fashion in Shelbourne for girls to lose their good name.

And Jael, the plain ill-used girl, who had sinned so many years ago, was more anxious over her beautiful child than many sober, respected matrons.

Many nights she lay awake thinking of what would happen to Priscilla if she died first.

"Maybe it's because I've been so near the devil myself," she would say sometimes to a neighbor. "I doesn't like to think o' any one as belongs to me, or doesn't belong neither, a-goin' that road."

To Jonathan's surprise, Priscilla was at home. Most days she spent wandering about in the lanes or copses. But to-day she was seated on her grandfather's bed, talking to him now and then, when he spoke to her.

Jonathan climbed the ladder.

The old man's blue eyes were fixed on him directly.

"I've got company to-day," he said in his thick, feeble way.

"Yes; so I see. You aren't often at home, 'Scilla, are you?"

She looked down, and lisped "No."

Jonathan noticed she was pale. Perhaps she had heard about Andrew, and was sorry?

Yes; she had heard, and she looked up and said, "I'm very sorry."

Jonathan trudged joyfully on to Hepreth ; and more partridges whirred up in the fields, and several men passed whistling. Jonathan whistled a little too, though only that morning Andrew had "got the mischief." Everything looked happier and brighter ; perhaps it was partly the reaction that always follows on any strain of anxiety or trouble ; but it was also that now Jonathan could say in all truth to his David,

"I've seen Priscilla, and I've told her about you. And she looked very downhearted, 'Drew. She is very sorry about you."

David's eyes were quite dry when Jonathan went into the ward—at least they looked so to the nurse, who was talking to him. But to Jonathan they looked brimful of tears ; and after he had given his message there could be no doubt about it. They overflowed and rolled hotly on to the pillow.

And Jonathan would have liked to have dried them ; but folks were looking on, so he didn't.

CHAPTER IX.

HOME FROM HEPRETH.

IT was dark before Jonathan got home again. He went first to Abraham Male's house.

He had not long to wait for Andrew's mother to open the door. She had been listening for footsteps for an hour gone by.

Jonathan had good news to give. Andrew was not so "dull," he said. He had cheered up and said he should soon get well, and come home again. Mother was not to fret, but to thank the Lord it hadn't been a deal worse.

Mrs. Male only had a few quiet tears of gratitude to wipe away now.

"But oh, Jonathan," she said, "what'll the damage be? you've lost a whole day's work."

"Nothin,' missus, nothin'," said Jonathan, turning away.

And then came an ominous sound from the chimney corner where Abraham Male was sitting, as he passed his coat-sleeve across his face.

As Jonathan went home he met Mr. Falk, who had been up to the schoolmaster's house.

"Good evening, sir," said Jonathan. He expected Mr. Falk to ask after Andrew.

"Good evening, Jonathan. I wish you'd come up to my place when you've an idle half hour. I want to ask you about the stove in that greenhouse. It don't act, and we may be expecting frosts next month—at least the month after. This is the last day of August, I think?"

"Yes, sir. I'll look in on Friday. I've got a job in the church that morning, so it'll be handy. We're much obliged to you, sir, for the loan of the mare. We got Andrew in comfortable."

"Oh, quite welcome," said Mr. Falk, hurriedly. Perhaps, like Jonathan, he disliked being thanked.

As Jonathan turned in at his own gate he looked at the bright lights in Mr. Falk's windows; he could see the leaping of the flames in the parlor, through the trees and the big green gate. He could not help a feeling of envy that sprang into his heart. If things had been otherwise with him—if his father had not lost his health and his work—such a home as that might have been Jonathan's. Golden prospects had opened before the young mechanic—high wages, a good position, everything that raises the ambition in the man had been in his grasp. And now—it was so different.

He opened the door, and saw his mother patching at his corduroy coat. There was a mess of greens and potatoes on the hearth, and a slice of cold pork on the table, ready for his supper; and Jonathan the elder, in the slouch hat, was bending as usual over the fire, white and silent, with compressed lips.

Jonathan gave a sigh as he sat down to his poor supper, and yet no one cared less for what he ate. But he did not sigh again. He could not grudge anything to Mr. Falk, who had always been so open-handed and pleasant with him. And then he fell to talking with his mother about Andrew.

"I've got a nice bit o' beet I *wish* as I had sent along with you to him," said Mrs. Cleare; "but you'll likely be going again, Jonathan?"

Jonathan smiled.

"I don't think they'll let him have the beet, mother; but I'll be going again."

"His father's agoin' We'nsday," said Mrs. Cleare, "so they tell me. But I'm so dull o' hearin' I'm afeard to repeat anythink as they says," she added gently.

"Then I'll go Saturday," said Jonathan, slicing at the cold pork, and eating with such an appetite that his mother rejoiced behind her spectacles.

Jonathan the elder drew in his chair, and took some supper too. This rejoiced his wife more than ever.

But she stitched away with turned-down eyes, and her prim sweet mouth betrayed nothing. She had little or no influence with her husband, but she had not lived with him thirty years for nothing.

"I think yer father *did* eat a nice bit o' supper to-night, Jonathan," she said, when he had gone to bed without a "good-night" to either of them. "But it don't do for me to make no count of it; it 'ud set him off his food at once."

"How's he been keeping to-day?" asked his son.

"I don't think he's been other than sadly. He don't say nothink; he's sich a *close* man. But Becky's been in, and she told me she'd heard him a-moanin' to hisself in the garden. I don't see as he gits no better, Jonathan, I don't."

She looked very sad for a few moments; but with that quiet sadness that some women carry with such grace. Most of us rebel at trouble; but there are some who have companioned with grief so long it has become part of their nature, and the struggle has long since ceased. There are a great many saints and martyrs in villages, as in history or in convents, who wear this look. There was one who wore it in Shelbourne, and that was Mrs. Cleare.

Next day, Mrs. Myse, calling to see Martha Male, found her much comforted. She was washing Andrew's clothes and taking a sad pleasure in it. She

had his sock pulled lovingly over her hand, as she stood by the wash-tray.

"There's the very socks as ever he had on," she said, shaking her head over them.

"It's good he has such a friend as Jonathan," said Mrs. Myse.

"Yes, ye see, ma'am, they've allus been mates. They've been wonderfully arter each other since ever they were lads at the school. Mr. Byles he knows that. And Andrew'd do the same for Jonathan any day, that he would, I'm sure. I knew as somethink were a-goin' to come to 'Drew," said Mrs. Male, her superstitious imagination carrying her a little away from the truth. "Soap never slipped with *me* as somethink didn't come of it. Dearie me, I hope it won't slip not agin to-day. But there's a sayin' as troubles never come single."

Mr. May joined his aunt, and they went up to Josiah Thorne's together.

"It's a long time since I have seen the poor old man," said Mrs. Myse, stepping along gallantly beside her thin, tall nephew, in his black alpaca coat, girding up her neat little black-brown dress, and showing a pair of flat cloth boots, with galoshes pulled over them. Her face was always thin and sallow—his face was thin enough too. Mr. Peel, the butcher, was quite sure Mr. May and Mrs. Myse did not get enough

to eat, and there were many people in Shelbourne who agreed with him. Some people thought they had hardly enough to wear. But all weathers saw them trotting about together in the parish—the tall, lean, sweet-faced nephew in alpaca; the short, sallow, sickly little aunt in galoshes.

This was the one point in which Mrs. Myse was guilty of taking care of herself. Self-preservation must come out somewhere, with the most unselfish of us: it came out in Mrs. Myse in galoshes.

The time had been when neither clergyman nor neighbor cared to go and see the Thornes.

They had always been a strange lot—strange in their ways and looks. The little house they lived in now had been pulled down by Josiah and his father and moved brick by brick to be built up again in the heart of the green little orchard at the end of that out-of-the-way lane. They built it together without help: hence the ladder which served them as a staircase, and the simplicity of the arrangements altogether—the crooked fireplace, the crooked windows, and a half-a-dozen other crooked things.

And when it was built, Josiah did not want to have much to do with neighbors. After Jael's fall he shut himself up more than ever. It was easy to do, seeing how far he was from the village, and how rutty the lane was. Neighbors used to say they saw him

squatting all day in the orchard with an old gun, shooting rooks or squirrels. Mrs. Myse herself had seen Jael up an apple-tree, throwing the apples into Priscilla's lap when she was a little girl, and was told to stand there and hold out her apron. But Mr. May and old age had softened the old man's heart, if it needed softening. He allowed "the minister" to come and see him now, and liked to hear him read.

Especially he liked the story of the Saviour's sufferings, though it was almost too much for him.

"I can't make out how they could do such queer things!" he would burst out when he heard of the insults offered by the soldiers; and he wept like a little child.

Very childlike he was as he lay there; ignorant, simple, and full of a quiet, unwavering faith, his dull ears straining to hear what Mr. May read. "Oh, no, we oughtn't to fret, we oughtn't. Look how He suffered; look all they put Him to! And yet He existed 'em all. I've had a deal o' trouble, I've had, i' my time. But the Lord He helped me through. I can't see as well as I used to could, but I sees the angels sometimes of a night, agoin' up and agoin' down—beautiful—past the winder."

"Where's Priscilla?" asked Mrs. Myse, when the reading was over.

"She ain't never here, my lady—scarcely never.

She likes gaddin' about best. She's allus arter flowers and sich-like in the copses. I don't blame her, I don't; it's very nice to be i' the fresh air. I forgets how he smells now, it's so long sin' I been out in him. But he had a sweet smell—he smelt beautiful, he did, o' mornings, when I were with the stock. And it makes ye feel warm-like and comfor'ble when ye gits in." And he pulled the poor, thin, blanket up to his sharp chin and shivered. His blood was beginning to course very slowly at ninety years of age.

"What a pity it is that poor child Priscilla can't do more for him," said Mrs. Myse, as they went home.

"The pity is," her nephew answered, "that that fine fellow Andrew cares for her."

CHAPTER X.

SIN AND SORROW.

THE Friday after Andrew had met with his accident broke with such serene beauty over little Shelbourne, and all the country round, that one would have thought grief and trouble had taken wing, and belonged to another world.

Mrs. Male, "tidying up" so as to be free next day to go to Hepreth hospital to see her boy, got quite hot in the sunshine that streamed into her room, and let the fire get low "a-purpose," as she said.

Jonathan had left the shop and the forge soon after eight o'clock, and gone to Pedley, the clerk, for the church-keys. He had a job to do there to the lock of the door.

The little grey tower stood out against the pale blue sky, and the cock on the top shone like gold in the sun. The Virginian creeper on Mr. Falk's brewery was beginning to put on its autumn dress of crimson and gold. The reaped fields round about lay resting in the sun, and the lark rose from them carolling gaily. Cocks and hens were all out and about,

crowing and cackling, and making the most of the fine morning. It might have been midsummer but for the extreme stillness that comes at the close of the year as of the day; and that here and there on the green graves in the churchyard on which the dew was shimmering, a little golden leaf had fallen—just one or two out of the great mass of foliage overhead, to remind people of death for them, and for the year.

Jonathan was soon at work at the lock. The church was quaint and old; old carved seats, old monuments of knights upon their backs, old brasses of monks in embroidered vestments; and a Crusader with a dog at his feet, his visor down, and his hands clasped over his mail-coat.

Through the broken but richly colored east window a stream of sun was pouring in. Dust motes were swirling in the long beam, and here and there a wakened fly was buzzing at the colorless windows opposite the door where Jonathan worked.

There was nothing to disturb him at his work. He looked out now and then at the sunshine, and the diamonds and rainbows the dew was making for him on the graves and in the low privet hedge. And he noticed that a group of women had gathered in the village street.

"Something's up," said Jonathan. But he felt little curiosity about it, for he knew Andrew was going on

well. And he put the last screw into the plate of the lock, kneeling on one knee and turning the driver deftly with his strong fingers. If it was only a screw that Jonathan had to see to, he gave to that screw all his mind for the time being. That was the secret of the village saying that Jonathan made a "rare job" of anything he set his hand to.

"Fine morning, master," he said, as old Pedley, the clerk, came and stood between him and the sunshine. "What are the women after down there?"

"Dun' know," said Pedley, smiling. "But it's mostly bad news when women gits together. It's like gulls: when they comes ashore o' a heap, that means foul weather."

Jonathan gathered up his tools and went on to Mr. Falk's gate. Sarah, the servant, was leaning over it, talking eagerly to one of the village women.

"What's up?" asked Jonathan.

"'Deed you may well ask. If it isn't a sin and a shame—and she that witless and innocent."

"And that young," said Sarah.

The words "witless and innocent" roused Jonathan's curiosity, even a little anxiety. Could it be 'Scilla—had anything happened to her? What would Andrew say if 'Scilla were ill or dying, and he not there to see her?

"Speak out, can't you?" he said. "What is it?"

"It's that poor thing 'Scilla," said Sarah, sighing. "And it's a sin and a shame of Andrew, it is. It isn't as if she were a girl as is all there. She's come to trouble like her mother, she has, and whatever's to become o' the child no one can't tell. For it ain't likely Jael hasn't enough to do and to send for, without another comin' to help empty the pot."

Jonathan stood rooted to the ground. 'Scilla come to this! 'Scilla disgraced, and 'Drew the cause of it!

It was that that hurt him: it was that that pained him to the quick. Sin there was in the world and all around; too much, indeed, for Jonathan to have marvelled that any poor girl had lost her good name. But that harmless, innocent Priscilla should be a victim—it was shameful, shameful, said Jonathan to himself. And worst of all, Andrew, his friend, his David, had brought her to this. His love had been *that* sort of love, had it?

Jonathan went into Mr. Falk's greenhouse, where he was to look at the stove.

He did look at the stove. He looked so long without moving that he awoke out of his reverie with a sort of start. There was a heaviness at his heart he could not away with. What would he have to tell Andrew when he went to see him next day?

He tried to apply himself to his work. Then he remembered he ought to see Mr. Falk about it, before

beginning. He had seen him at his breakfast as he passed the snug dining-room window, and Sarah had rushed in, full of the news, to pour it out to her master.

He went round to the front door. Mr. Falk's breakfast was over, and Sarah was clearing away. What a long time Jonathan must have stared at the stove. He rang the bell, and Sarah answered it.

Her master had just gone out at the back, she said.

Jonathan felt relieved. He did not want to see even Mr. Falk just then. He shrank from the reproaches he must hear heaped on Andrew. It could not matter about the stove to-day. It seemed to Jonathan that nothing could matter, but the one thing that filled his mind. Poor little Priscilla! How could any man wrong her so? Least of all Andrew.

Perhaps the bitterest cup that it is ever man's lot to drink is that which he tastes when he falls irrevocably in his own esteem. But the next bitterest is when a dear friend falls: and we have to look on and see that he has fallen. Forgive him, excuse him we may; but to put him in the old place, quite in the old place, is that possible?

All the day, wherever Jonathan went the same cry rang in his ears, "Shame, shame, on Andrew! He that was by way of looking after her, taking care of her! He that folk called so steady and upright in his

ways!" All the more, for the good name he bore, was reproach and censure hurled at Andrew.

"People as make no perfessions we don't expect nothin' of sich," said some; "but, when folks carries theirselves higher than their neighbors, and is so chary of their company and sich, we does expect them to live up to it."

Not that poor Andrew had ever made any enemies. He had only earned a good name.

Jonathan could not face Andrew's mother before he went to Hepreth. And go to Hepreth he would. All the world would be against Andrew now, so it would never do for him to give him up. He sent his mother to Martha Male to ask if she were going in too, as she had promised. He had agreed to walk with her.

"She ain't a-goin', Jonathan," was the answer, when Mrs. Cleare came back. "She's ta'en it terrible to heart, she has. She says she couldn't go anigh him, and not give him her mind, she couldn't; so she's best away."

CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD BIBLE, AND WHAT IT SAW.

JOSIAH THORNE had an old Bible that lay always upstairs in the bedroom, on the top of the rickety chest of drawers.

It had a comprehensive inscription on the first page—

“Josiah Thorne—A present to him, and it’s his Bible.”

It had been Jael’s custom, ever since Priscilla had been a little girl, to use this Bible as a magician would his wand.

“’Scilla,” she would say, when she was doubtful as to whether Priscilla were telling her the truth about some childish misdemeanor, “I’m a-goin’ to look in here, and that’ll tell me true. So now it ain’t no use for you to try no deceivin’.”

Jael could not read a word of the Bible, no more could Josiah. But that did not make her hesitate in the least about referring to it to “tell her true.” And Priscilla had learnt to look at the old brown cover with a childish awe. The terrible book that was

never looked at except when something was wrong, and that then would infallibly speak true and show up the offender—what respect could be great enough for it ?

On the sad Saturday night after poor Priscilla—the sinned against, rather than the sinning—had brought an unwelcome little infant into the world, Jael sat stunned and stupefied at the foot of the bed where she lay.

A dim light fell over the poor bare room. The father slept peacefully, and only his quick breathing disturbed the silence.

Priscilla was awake at first, but Jael did not speak to her. What was there to say ? It was all past words—the sin, and the shame, and the trouble. The old Bible lay there closed upon the drawers ; what use to ask it questions ?

Jael sat bowed down by the weight of it all. The Lord's judgments were very heavy on her. She had hidden the story of her own fall so long, so watchfully ; but her sin had found her out. The girl that did not know her mother had fallen—had fallen too. The Lord's ways were past finding out, said Jael, who felt all the time that she had brought her own griefs upon herself, and that never had she seen the wages of sin dealt out more faithfully.

All the hopes were gone ; the comfort, the happi-

ness of later days. Andrew marry 'Scilla? Fool that she had been to think it! Doubly fool not to have known men better; she who had suffered so from their false promises herself.

She moaned as she thought how she had let him come about the place, how she had felt happy when he brought home 'Scilla, how she had petted the viper that had crept into her nest. And he had never promised even to marry 'Scilla: and yet Jael had trusted him!

Her poor child; her poor witless, innocent child! The tears that had been long time strangers to Jael's eyes coursed over her weather-beaten face, and fell drop by drop upon the brown hands folded on her lap. How much there is in the folding of the hands! The complacent folding of content was not an attitude for Jael Thorne at her happiest moments; now it was the woofullest despair that looked from the woman's unstrung form, and loosely folded hands.

The silent hours went by, and still the clock ticked solemnly in the little room below. Some rat rushed shrieking through the rafters. All else was silence; only Jael's tears flowed on.

They hardly flowed; their channel was too dry, too long unused, to allow of that healthful stream of weeping that best eases a woman's heart. Jael's tears were wrung from her, slowly and painfully; and though they

fell often, her heart ached on without relief, and a sharp physical pain came into her parched throat.

She was forty years old. She had known suffering, poverty, loneliness before; she had seen in herself that worst enemy—sin. But now the last and bitterest blow had been dealt. The old enemy had been on her track again, and this time he had laid wait for and ruined, not her, but her child.

"The Lord is a hard man!" cried poor Jael; "a hard, hard man!" And a few moments after, with a paroxysm of anger and grief that shook her sturdy frame, and convulsed her plain, flat features, she threw herself upon her knees beside the bed, and moaned into the faded patch-work counterpane at 'Scilla's feet.

"Andrew, false and cruel, to come across my door with yer wheedlin' ways and yer comely face and well-favored bearin'. It's comely faces that does all the ill in all the world. *He* came to me with 's comely face, with 's promises, and his deceivin'! And I were plain—not looked at like other girls about. I hadn't never a sweetheart. He took my heart, he wonned it away he did—and then he took my clean name from me. But it's on'y me as is hurt by that, and the Lord He knows I bore w' it, and held my peace, and folks was good and didn't shame me open. But the child here that the Lord gi'e me as was made so fair a-purpose for her ruin. Lord forgi'e

me! I forgi'e Thee as has done this, for I done wrong I don't deny to Thee. But what had I done to Andrew that he should wrong the child and me? Lord, they says as Thou has pity on the poor. I dun' know Thee; it ain't likely as Thou 'ud know a deal about me. But I tell Thee as Andrew Male, of Shelbourne parish, has done me a grievous wrong, and her he's ruined—look how she lies there a-sleepin', and the babe upon her arm! My sweetheart as is dead—Thou knows as I forgave *him* long ago, but don't Thee forgive Andrew Male! Thee won't, Lord, if Thee knows the rights o' things!"

Priscilla turned in her sleep, and made a crooning sound as she drew her baby nearer to her. Jael lifted up her face an instant and stayed her torrent of words and moanings.

The candle had burnt down into the socket, and was throbbing out its life. But the room was light; the first dawn was stealing in again through the elm tree at the garret window.

Five o'clock boomed out from the steeple at Shelbourne. Jael shivered and knelt on, crouched up by the poor bed, her grey hair disordered, and her weary eyes fixed on the pinkness of the far-off sky.

Priscilla turned again.

"Do 'e want for anythin'?" said Jael, in a low, hoarse voice.

"Give me a drink, mother."

Jael rose from her knees, and found herself stiff from cold and from long kneeling. She filled a cup with water and put it to Priscilla's lips. The girl drank, and then turned contentedly on her pillow to look as her baby.

Tenderly those untaught hands drew the ragged flannel round the little child, for whom no preparations had been made; lovingly the witless girl drew the warm armful to her breast. For her mother she had never shown love, if she felt it; she did not thank her now, or seem to notice that she was about and dressed, and waiting on her through the night.

But this child—the fruit of sin—this Priscilla loved! Again she drew it closer to her, and again Jael heard her croon in pleased content.

It was such a mockery of Jael's anguish, of the black, long night, spent in tears and grief; of the shame and the sin that had come upon her—it went to Jael's heart like a sharp knife. All her self-control left her, and regardless of 'Scilla's state, she poured out the burden of her poor heart into the girl's ears.

She fell upon her knees first, and then dragged herself up towards the pillow. 'Scilla, smiling, looked tranquilly at her.

"Well was yer name called Thorne," said Jael fiercely, clutching at the bedclothes and looking at the

beautiful face that pressed the pillow. "A thorn to me you've been since ever the Lord planted 'e in my side. I've loved 'e, grieved over 'e, toiled for 'e, and all for this—that 'e should go into the paths of sin and fall, as yer mother did afore 'e. And that babe, there," she cried, lifting up her hand,—'Scilla drew the baby nearer again, and looked frightened,—"all the love as ever was in that heart of yourn is guv' to that!—to that! Andrew Male, may the Lord hear me—"

"Missus!" said a voice behind Jael, at the head of the stairs.

Jael turned round and saw a man's shadow in the doorway.

It was Jonathan.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT JONATHAN HAD DONE.

JONATHAN had gone to Hepreth on the Saturday afternoon. It was nine o'clock when he got home, too late to disturb Jael ; and his tidings could not be as good to Jael as they seemed to him. But at five o'clock he was up, though it was a Sunday morning, and before six he was at the Thornes' house.

The latch lifted at once—Jael had forgotten to lock the door that night.

It seemed to him a long, long time since he had set out for the hospital, carrying the weight of his disquietude. Andrew was not fit to be troubled : and yet Jonathan knew he would ask after Priscilla. He had, too, a longing to hear Andrew say that he was grieved for the terrible wrong he had done to the girl he loved, and to her mother. Jonathan could not understand the love that could ruin its object.

"It should be called by a worse name, I reckon," he said to himself as he walked along the white chalk road between the cuttings, and past the elm wood, and then past the tan-yard, and the workhouse, and the

brewery, and the little villas outside the town, and reached at length the High Street and the Hospital.

He had timed himself purposely to arrive there only half an hour before the time for admitting visitors was over. It was the first time he had ever known the feeling of unease in Andrew's company ; it was the first time he had ever shortened an hour that was to be spent with his mate. Yet how could he be at ease with Andrew now ? Afraid to excite him or give him pain when he was already ill and suffering, and so afraid to "have it out," as he had with Andrew in every trouble they had got into before.

The sickly smell of chloride of lime and medicines in the clean, airy ward seemed sicklier than ever to Jonathan.

At the first sound of his foot on the boards, Andrew's face was turned and looking at him.

"I thought you'd come," he said. "I'm a deal better. The doctor says I'm gittin' on first-rate."

How could he look so pleased and cheerful ? Why did his eyes seem so clear and honest, as if there was no stain upon his conscience—as if he had done no wrong ?

Perhaps most of us look ashamed only when others are ashamed for us, not before ; then the veil is torn down, and the real man we have known so long ourselves, has taken the place of the seeming man in the

world's eyes. Then we think we are ashamed ; but it is of the shame—not of the sin. And how does that stand in God's sight, who loves righteousness ?

Jonathan sat down beside the bed, but he pushed the chair back against the wall, so that he sat beside Andrew, not facing him, as he had done before. You would have thought Jonathan was the culprit to have seen them ;—he felt like it himself when he became conscious that he could not bear to meet Andrew's eyes.

They sat there and talked of little or nothing. Jonathan asked questions about the other patients in the beds on either side. It wearied Andrew very soon. He wanted to hear about home and 'Scilla. He had not forgotten that Jonathan had told him she was sorry for him, and for what had happened. Forgotten it ? how should he ? He had dreamt about it all the night, and thought about it all the day.

"You haven't seen 'Scilla again, have you ?" he asked shyly, after a silence, broken only by Jonathan's playing with the little medicine glass on the small table beside the bed.

"Not again," said Jonathan.

Andrew was silent again for a few moments. Then he said—

"I has a deal o' time to think, I has, here. I thinks a deal about the old place—and her. I'd like to see

Muster May, I would. I've often been hard when he's spoken kind to me. Now I've thought sometimes maybe my trial had come, and that it 'ud go hard with me. It's a thing to make a chap remember the wrong things he's done, and the right things he's left without doin.' But I'm feared I thinks most of 'Scilla ; she's hardly never out of my mind, day nor night. I suppose she couldn't come to see me, could she ? I'd take it so kind it she could. I sometimes keep on a-thinkin' I'd get round quicker if so be as I could see her face."

"She's not like to come just at present," said Jonathan. Andrew must be prepared for something like the truth ; his sin was lying at his heart, plain and sure enough.

"She's not ill ?" said Andrew, straining his neck to catch a sight of Jonathan's face. "She's been out o' evenin's in the wet, I warrant, and me not there to look ar'ter her and see her home."

Jonathan did not answer. A fearful dread leapt up in Andrew's heart.

"My God !" he said, and the sweat stood out upon his forehead. "Naught's happened to 'Scilla ? My girl's not dead ?"

The truth would be less hard to Andrew than what he feared. He that was father of 'Scilla's child could not be so troubled or surprised to hear it had come

into the world, as he seemed now thinking that 'Scilla had died. Andrew had put the fact of the child's expected birth and 'Scilla's death together; that was plain enough. Jonathan would relieve him of half his pain.

"'Scilla's not dead," he answered, lowering his tone, "she and the child is living. It was born Friday morning—that's yesterday, early. It's a little boy."

Jonathan never forgot the look upon Andrew's face at that moment. It was a look that troubled Jonathan like a haunting spirit all his life through. Despair and anger, agony and shame—they met and made havoc with the plain face of the quiet young man, with the straight fair hair across his brown forehead, and the kind honest eyes, that had lain so patiently in his narrow hospital bed.

Before Jonathan could stop him, Andrew had raised himself in bed, throwing the clothes off him violently, as if he were going to get up. The quiet, decided nurse was beside him in a moment; she looked angrily at Jonathan, who sat saying nothing.

What had he done? Was this the way Andrew would have taken the news he must have been waiting for?

"Andrew, don't hurt yourself now," he said, looking at the pale, agitated face beside him. "You can

make amends to 'Scilla when the Lord raises you up. You love her, and——"

"*Love her?*" cried Andrew. His voice rose almost to a shriek, and all through the wards they heard him crying again and again—" *Love her ! Love her !*" with a wild defiance that made Jonathan sick at heart.

Every thin face on every pillow lifted itself up, and asked what it was. The thin faces in the Accident-ward only, saw Andrew sitting up with wild, dilated eyes, and the fierceness of delirium or madness in his face. Jonathan could do nothing ; the nurse could do nothing ; but the house surgeon, who had come up, after putting a question or two to Jonathan, said kindly—

"Put the screen round the bed, nurse." Then to Jonathan, "You stay with him for half-an-hour. Have it out with him quietly, and before you go speak to me. I don't want to know any secrets," he said, laying his hand on Andrew's trembling shoulder, "but I must know what state you leave his mind in, if we're to do anything with him."

They were left alone together. After a little Andrew lay down, too exhausted to sit up. Jonathan held a little sponge which he dipped in vinegar and water and pressed on his burning head. His fingers were large and clumsy for work like this : the little sponge seemed nowhere, as he squeezed it carefully

and slowly every time on the edge of the basin, and carefully moved it, without any drip, over the pillow.

After half-an-hour he came out from behind the screen, and the nurse called the surgeon.

"It's a bad job, and it's best I should tell you, sir."

"It's better I should know as much as you like to tell," he answered.

Jonathan looked down upon the ground, and his voice shook a little. The surgeon noticed it, and it did not make him like Jonathan the less.

"Tell me what you can," he said again. "It's quite safe with me."

"There ain't nothing to be ashamed of, sir," said Jonathan, lifting up his face. "He's got a girl he keeps company with, and she's got in trouble. He's my mate, but I thought he was the cause of it; and I thought by what he said he were expecting it—and I told him as she was taken bad, and the child was born. And he says, sir, by the God above him, that it isn't his child, and he's never done her no wrong."

The surgeon looked puzzled.

"You think that's the truth, then," he asked, a little doubtfully.

"The truth, sir? He's my mate, sir. He's never told me a lie yet; and if you'll go and see him, you'll believe it's the truth."

They went in together. Andrew was lying quite

quiet, and worn out; crying silently like a broken-hearted girl.

"It isn't my babe," he said, suddenly, looking up fixedly into their faces. "But I'll make her amends!" He stopped crying and dried the tears himself off his face.

"I'm afraid he's wandering a little," said the surgeon, "you had better go."

CHAPTER XIII.

DAYLIGHT.

SO Jonathan walked home under the quiet stars, and felt happier. In spite of Andrew's terrible grief, in spite of the foreboding he had that it might be too much for him, and that unwittingly he might be the cause of Andrew's death—in spite of all this, he could not help thanking God that 'Drew was his old mate still—the man he had taken him to be.

Insensibly he quickened his pace. He must set Andrew straight now with the rest of the world. How he would silence the unkind reproaches and evil-speakings that had set all tongues wagging! And then Jonathan felt ashamed thinking that even *he* had believed that Andrew had ruined 'Scilla. This brought him to think of Mr. May. Mr. May, he knew, must have been terribly troubled about it. Andrew was one of his favorites in all the parish. Jonathan was quite sharp enough to know that he was another; his eye twinkled as he thought of it.

The owl in the church tower hooted as Jonathan vent in at the lodge gate, and walked up to the Place.

He had passed Abraham Male's without going in, because he was afraid Mr. May and Mrs. Myse might have gone to bed if he delayed. And Martha and Abraham he knew would sit up to hear about Andrew. He had seen the light in their window.

He rang at the bell, and Mr. May opened it, holding a flaring candle in his hand, that only threw its light upon a patch of the oak floor of the large empty hall.

"Come in, Jonathan," he said.

"I thought, sir, you'd have heard this bad business about 'Scilla Thorne, and that you'd think, like other folks, that it was Andrew. So I came along to tell you I've been to the hospital, and it's not Andrew that's the guilty party, whoever it is. As sure, Mr. May, sir, as I stand here, it's not 'Drew. He said before Almighty God he's done her never a wrong!"

"Aunt!" called Mr. May, unable to withhold the news a moment from her.

"Yes, dear." She came out thin and worn, and with a sadder look on her face than usual.

"It's not Andrew," said Mr. May; "Jonathan's seen him, and he is innocent."

"Thank God!" she said. "Oh, thank God!" and they stood shivering and smiling together in the big, dark hall.

"It has weighed upon us so, we've been quite

miserable," she said, clasping her little thin hands over each other. They were clothed in black silk mittens, now that the weather was getting cold. "But you'll come in and have some hot elder wine, Jonathan, now you are here?"

But Jonathan was impatient to be off. It was Saturday night, and he had to go to Abraham's house before he got to supper and bed. And all the time the sweet little deaf mother would be sitting up waiting.

"I never goes to bed before Jonathan comes back," she used to say. "He goes to the 'Red Inn' for half-an-hour now and again; and he often goes and has a bit of crack with Andrew, or does a job for Mr. Byles. But he's never behind 's time, he isn't."

Mrs. Male burst into tears when she heard Jonathan's news.

"I never thought as it were him, I didn't, and they may say it who like. He never give me no trouble yet, nor yet his father. But folks is that malicious they'd like to blacken better folk than my poor boy. And him with a mischief and a-lyin' there hurted on 's back—and a frettin', I'll warrant, about that poor make-shift hussey with her chance child. Bless the Lord, there won't be no summonin' nor nothin' for 'Drew. And what's better, he's got a clean heart,

bless his soul, and it's with some bad fellow that the ruin of the poor dazed thing 's a lyin'."

And at last Jonathan got to bed; but he was awake and up very early, and we find him again where we left him—on the top of the ladder in Josiah Thorne's house.

"Missus!" he said. And Jael had risen from her cramped knees, and gone to the door.

Her sad eyes, and distracted, disordered look, awed Jonathan. He knew Jael would grieve, but he had not guessed how much.

"I've grieved for you, Jael," he said. It was a great deal for Jonathan to say.

She only shook her head, and went on looking at him absently, wearily.

"I want to speak with you, missus, if you can give me a hearin' for a minute," he said presently.

She followed him slowly down the ladder.

"Have you the rheumatics?" asked Jonathan, seeing how stiffly she moved, and noticing that she held her brown hand upon her heart.

"Rheumatics?" she repeated, and then she shook her head again, always without speaking.

"I've been to Hepreth," began Jonathan. Jael's eyes turned to a fierce brightness. "And I've come to tell you, missus, as it weren't Andrew as has served 'Scilla so."

"Weren't Andrew?"

"No, missus, it weren't 'Drew. He loved your girl straightfor'ard and true, and——"

"Ay, *straightfor'ard*; ay, *very true*—true 's the Devil as follows the innocent soul and body to——"

"Missus, if you don't believe what I says, nor what Andrew says, come into Hepreth hospital, and into Harper's Ward; and on the second bed beyond the first window you'll see Andrew lyin'. I ask you to look at him, and see whether he's spoke true. If ever man were cut up and broken in pieces like, with bad news, that man's Andrew. And it's me that did it, all unknowin'. And if I'd known how he'd have took it, and that he was as clear as day, I'd have cut my hand off to have saved him. We've always been mates; and it's hard as it must be me that was to give him a blow like what I've given him to-day."

Jael was staring at him now, and silent.

"Then he didn't know as she were like to come to this?"

"Know it? No more than I knew it, missus. He swore it before 's Maker, lyin' there upon 's bed."

"And who done it, then—*who done it*?" moaned the woman, rocking herself to and fro, and fixing her grief-laden eyes upon Jonathan.

What use was it to answer? Jonathan knew no more than Jael. God's silence was over them.

They sat in His silence, looking at each other; and Jael shivered over the black, empty hearth, and the cold, grey light of the early morning fell on the dusty, disordered room, and wrote one word on everything—desolation.

Suddenly Jael rose and said, still holding her hand upon her heart—

"I'll know who done it—I'll know who done it! If he's far or near I'll find him, and I'll shame him."

And up the ladder she began toiling again, with hurried, uncertain steps.

"Come up," she called to Jonathan, who stood below.

He followed her, because her ashy color and trembling gait made him fearful for her and for Priscilla. He would not go quite in, but he would stand in the doorway to be at hand if he were needed.

Jael went straight to the bed where Priscilla lay; she drew the counterpane down a little, and showed the girl's fair, fresh, childish face, flushed with sleep, and the rounded arms clasped round the little bundle wrapped in the ragged flannel.

"'Scilla!" she said, roughly.

The girl woke with a start, and clasped her baby tighter.

"Don't kill the babe as you've nigh killed me—as you're a killin' me," said Jael; "no one don't want it,

nor yet the shame it's brought. I've come to ask who's done this to 'e, 'Scilla, and leave 'e I won't, till so be as you've spoken out and told me true."

The girl looked at her wonderingly, but made no answer.

Jael went to the old Bible. Priscilla raised her head a little, and followed her mother with her bright blue eyes.

"See," said Jael, lifting the book off the chest of drawers. "I'm agoin' to look in here. This'll tell me true, 'Scilla, and it's no good for you to try no deceivin'."

She lifted it in her hands, and raised it over the bed where 'Scilla lay. The short broad figure threw a dark shadow over the girl. She trembled, and hid her face in the little warm bundle in her arms. But there was no answer.

"Missus!" said Jonathan, taking a step forward. He thought Jael would be the death of 'Scilla.

But she would brook no interference. Angrily she waved Jonathan back, and stood a moment thinking.

At last a sudden thought seized her, as she watched her girl beginning to fondle the baby again, crooning over it softly, lovingly.

"'Scilla!"—Jael threw the Bible on to the pillow; then she fell upon her knees, and looking into the

girl's face with an expression of mingled love and passion, she said fiercely—

“'Scilla, if 'e don't tell me who it is as has done thee this wrong, I'll take the child from 'e!”

It was then that Jonathan heard distinctly across the room, through the cold twilight, an audible whisper; it said—“*Mr. Falk !*”

CHAPTER XIV.

AARON FALK'S SUNDAY.

"**R**ING-A-DING, ding!" went the merry bells of Shelbourne Church that Sunday morning, just as they had done on other Sunday mornings. Out came the sun in his glory, and out came all Shelbourne in its Sunday best.

Pedley, the clerk, in his black, swallow-tailed coat and white cravat; Hare, the baker, in his pea-coat, with the velvet collar; Peel, the butcher, with his blooming fat cheeks; Horne, the postman, with his tramp, tramp, up the aisle, and his business-like way of opening his pew door as if he had letters to deliver there, and letters of importance; Mr. May, in his neatly darned surplice and smoothly brushed hair; Mrs. Myse, in her best pelisse and tucker; all the school-children helter-skelter, push and jostle, tumbling over each other into their places. Behind them, coughing, wheezing, and dyspeptic, something long and straight like a bottle, robed in great coats and corked with a comforter. It was Mr. Byles.

Pedley was breathing about the church heavily—

he always breathed heavily when he was busy, and happy, and important. And what busier, happier, more important day could be for Zimri Pedley, parish clerk, than Sunday ?

The harmonium had begun to play, the basses were scraping their throats, and the trebles were touching bonnets and whispering. However many practices there might be during the week, there was always something to whisper about on Sunday.

Martha Male, in black cotton gloves and with folded hands, was seated complacently in her place. It was not the custom for the women to come to church in the mornings; but to-day Martha Male felt constrained to make an appearance in public. She had worked well that morning in Andrew's cause; now, for the credit of the family, she would come and show her happy full face, framed in its neat bonnet, to the Shelbourne world. Not only her face told her story; the crown of her bonnet, and the grey ribbon in it, stood out stiffly with respectability. Every bow was a banner of motherly peace and pride.

But one pew was empty—the great square pew, red cushioned and comfortable, that belonged to Mr. Falk.

He stood in his back-yard and heard the bells ring that Sunday morning; he went in-doors, and stood in the parlor, with the Hepreth paper in his

hand. The bells followed him there, till they had beat out a long half-hour, and then they ceased. Aaron Falk put down the paper, and stood irresolute. Should he go to church? Had people heard? Had the girl perhaps told the truth? Was it being passed from mouth to mouth now amongst the women that stayed at home to cook the dinners, and would the men whisper it while they waited for the harmonium to strike up?

The harmonium struck up even then. Still Aaron Falk stood hesitating, with his face towards the door. It was cowardly not to go; it would stamp him, perhaps, as the guilty man. If he went, it would be braving the scandal, showing he cared nothing—that the tale was false.

What tale? Aaron Falk had heard no tale but that of Andrew Male's misconduct. He had not heard that Andrew had denied it the night before from his bed, in Hepreth Hospital. For all he knew, the people still thought Andrew to blame. For, said Aaron to himself—and as he said it the harmonium pealed out with all its little strength, as if to drown his thought—if Andrew *did* deny it, who would believe him? He had kept company with the girl so long. With *him* the blame must rest—*must* rest, said Aaron Falk, with irresolute resolution.

Yet suppose *another* tale *were* abroad? Suppose

Aaron Falk's good name were gone? Suppose the well-to-do, respected brewer—whose fathers for generations back had been the great men of Shelbourne, to whom all the people had looked for help—suppose he had fallen in the esteem of these poor laborers and their wives, and fallen all the lower because he had stood so high before?

The harmonium ceased; the service had begun. It was too late to go to church now. Aaron Falk sank into his arm-chair and stared restlessly at the empty grate.

The thought of how he might now stand in the sight of all the people, in the sight of Mr. Byles—above all in the sight of Mr. May—this unnerved him quite. The color had gone from his straight, regular features; they had taken a pinched, worn look. To lose his name, to lose the good-will of his neighbors and his dependents, it was a terribly hard thing for Aaron Falk. Fool that he had been! If he could but undo the past, and be sure he held the place he had held a year ago! A month ago, said he, remembering that a month ago every one had smiled on him—that even yesterday no one knew!

Later, but not yet, the better man in him carried the wish to the year ago, and left it mostly there. Later he knew repentance, and was so far a nobler man. Now his suffering was too great for anything

but a keen and hard remorse. That it should be known—there was the sting.

He sprang up suddenly. Perhaps it was not known! Fool that he had been again, to loiter here, when something might be done to avert the evil thing he dreaded. But yesterday they thought it was Andrew; to-day, all Shelbourne might be thinking the same. The girl might not have betrayed him; she might have been *afraid* to tell.

He seized his hat and went out again by the back yard. He saw a man in a field a little way off, and hesitated. If people saw him going to Josiah Thorne's cottage he was undone. Should he wait till night? And his thoughts turned to a large dark comforter that hung in the lobby, and that would be suitable and useful for that evening walk. But no—Sunday was an idle day. Before nightfall half Shelbourne might have been at Jael's house, perhaps at Priscilla's bed-side. It was now only ten o'clock; the chances of his being the first visitor to that out-of-the-way place were good and many.

Some people say a Sunday morning in the open air is as good and as inspiring as any service between four walls. It may be so to some. It was not so to Aaron Falk, on whose eyes the familiar landscape ached, this Sunday morning. He went by roundabout paths, it is true; he was ready at any moment to strike

off in an opposite direction from the Thornes' house. But he knew every field and lane; it seemed to him they knew him also.

The air was sunny and light with the lightness of early autumn, and the sky a very tender delicate blue. The thistles had gone to seed, and the linnets stirred them and sent them flying. The crows cawed lazily, knowing no one would molest them now. The very stubble looked golden in the sunlight. God's finger was on everything, and it was all fair.

Perhaps there was too much of God for Aaron Falk's peace, as he walked on hurriedly through it all.

That mysterious un-ease that falls upon the transgressor of His laws had fallen upon the soul of this man, though as he quickened his pace the hope came more and more strongly to him that Shelbourne did not know—that Shelbourne never *need* know after all.

CHAPTER XV.

JAEL'S SECOND VISITOR.

OUT of breath, and with some color once more in his face, Mr. Falk reached the little gate, still swinging out crazily upon its broken hinge.

On the orchard trees were still the ungathered apples; a few clothes dried to boards stood out stiff upon the privet hedge. The grass was rank and long, and Jael's black cat crept stealthily about in it. It was a weird place always, looking neglected and uncared for, and never more so than to-day, when the old man had been a month in his bed, and Jael's thoughts and time were given to other things than the clothes or the orchard.

Aaron Falk buttoned his Sunday coat at the waist, and eased his collar, as he approached the house.

He tapped. A chicken rushed between his feet through an opening in the old weather-beaten door. It startled him. But not more than the face which looked out at him when the door had been pushed open with a harsh sound as if stones were under it, and Jael Thorne's short, stout figure filled the foreground.

They stood looking at each other, the well-dressed, well-to-do brewer, and the dirty, middle-aged, poor woman, and neither spoke.

It was Mr. Falk who hesitatingly broke the silence.

"I have come to speak to you," he began, his color changing a little under her steady glance.

"And speak you may," she answered sternly, "though it's little good as ever came o' words when deeds is done and over. And speak outside you shall, if you please, for come across this door you shan't, so long as I've breath in this here body."

Mr. Falk considered a moment which line he had better take. He thought the safest would be to try and appease Jael's anger. *She* knew then; did any one else know? The haunting fear made him hesitate no longer.

"I hear your girl has come to trouble, Jael," he began again.

"*Trouble?* you *hear*, do you? It's been a long time reaching *your* ears. It's a wonder you didn't come by the knowledge wi'out *hearin'!*" She raised her clenched hand, and said, fiercely, "You've ruined my girl, Aaron Falk, and for all I've been a bad 'un before her, and for all you're a brewer and a land-owner, and she a poor, half-witted thing as can't save herself—no, nor fight for herself—for all that, I'll have my revenge on ye, and I'll see her righted, so far 's

one can be righted as a man's wronged as *you've* wronged her."

"Jael," said Aaron, changing color very unmistakably now, "I've come to have a word with you. Perhaps it will be better for you, as well as me, if you'll listen."

He had keen eyes, and now that he was on his mettle and master of himself again, he fixed them with a determined look on Jael. Her glance had conquered him for a moment: he would master her now. Under the keenness of his look there was an under current of fear—an almost craven fear, but it was hid away from the blunt, honest woman, and might have been hidden to wiser eyes than hers.

Jael involuntarily drew back into the house, and suffered Mr. Falk to follow her. He lifted the latch, and shut the door carefully. Then putting his stick on the table, he said, with affected *hauteur*—

"Priscilla has told you, I suppose, what is not true. I guess so by your behavior to me."

"*Told me !*" cried Jael, too excited to speak without repeating his words continually; and her tone struck terror to Aaron's heart. "*Told me !*" Did it mean *every one* knew? Was all chance over?

He was still knocked down by this fear, when Jael called out suddenly, "What has brought *you* here, Aaron Falk, if it's a false tale?"

He could only look at her with a startled and ashamed look.

"Hear the *tale* you've not," said Jael, standing away from him, as if she would not defile herself by contact with him, "and if it's not a guilty heart as has kerried you here this mornin', it's a wondrous strange thing, it is. Make a clean breast of it, and humble yerself, Aaron Falk, for to try on deceivin' with me, it ain't no manner of use nor profit."

A sudden hope had filled his mind while she spoke. "*Hear* the tale you've not," she said. Then it was not abroad yet!

"Jael," he said—almost trembling with the sense of sudden relief, and forgetting in the sweetness of it the denial of his guilt—"Jael, you've not spread the tale abroad, I see; you would not do me such an unkindness, I know. I am so willing to try and make amends to you—to—to"—he began feeling in his pocket for his purse. "Anything you would consider a compensation—anything in reason, you know, Jael," he said, opening the purse and looking at her at the same moment, furtively.

The room shook under the thundering blow that Jael's fist came down with on the table. She hissed out her words at him, while the veins swelled in her brown neck and face stretched towards him.

"*Compense* me? *Compense me* for my gal's good

name ? Out with your money, you Aaron Falk, and begone from my doors. You think to tie our tongues, do you, with your gold and your silver ? They can do a deal, they can, making a villain look like a gen'leman, and whited outside like the 'purchres as the blessed Lord talked about, as was full of rubbish and muck within. My tongue's free, and so's my gal's ; and if others is blamed as is innocent like the lamb unborn, and t'other is the bad 'un as has done the wrong, I'm not one to let the mud stick to the other, and let t'other go clean and dry, with a stiff neck and a foul heart. I'll say my say, and all the *parish* shall know the truth, Aaron Falk, before ever another night's over."

And she beckoned him haughtily to the door.

The color had come back now to Aaron's face. He stood quite quiet till Jael had exhausted herself, his lips compressed in silent determination.

"Jael," said he, waving his hand over the floor of the room, paved rudely with broken bricks and stones, "you know on whose ground this house stands ?"

She did not answer, and he went on—

"You also know to whom the orchard belongs ? Who gives you the house rent free ? Who allowed our father to squat here ? Who allows him to re-

main here when he is useless as a laborer, and worse than useless as a tenant ?”

He saw with secret satisfaction that his words were taking effect, and he continued—

“ You know your father’s age, and that *you* are not as young or as strong as you have been. You know that Priscilla is unable to support herself or you. I shall be sorry, of course, to deprive you of the cottage, and to turn your father out ; I know it would be the death of him. He has been here since he was a lad, and he has often told me he loves every brick and stone.”

Jael’s head had bowed a little upon her breast.

“ It rests with you, mind, Jael. You will have to decide now. If your father is taken from his bed, and dies in the workhouse or on the high road, his death will lie at your door.”

Her head bowed further still.

“ You are a proud woman, and I know that you’ve been wronged. But the wrong is done, and your telling the tale in the parish won’t mend matters now. It will only ruin me and *you*, Jael—you, and your *father*, and *Priscilla*, more than me, perhaps.”

The short, stout figure was leaning upon the table now. The brown withered face was buried in the hard brown hands. Great sobs shook the broad

shoulders, that the threadbare gown covered so scantily.

A tremulous sound came down from the little garret above.

Jael raised her head instantly.

"Yes, fa'der ! I'm a-comin' !"

She went slowly and heavily up the ladder, holding her hand upon her heart.

"What is't, fa'der dear ?"

"'Scilla says as some 'un's a-sayin' we must go out and leave 'e old place. It's not right, is it, lass ? It's not right as 'at nobody's a-sayin' that ?"

Jael did not answer. She had her hand over her eyes.

"Lass, if they be a-sayin' that, ast 'em just to come and take the life o' me. It 'ud be bad for you and 'Scilla if I died agoin' down the ladder, and I couldn't go not no further. My heart he'd 'ave broke by the second rung."

The sweet old face puckered up feebly, like the face of a little child ; and, like a little child, the old man wept.

"No, no, fa'der, we ain't a-goin' out. No 'un shan't a-turn us out. Don't 'e be frettin', fa'der !"

And slowly and heavily again down the ladder went Jael Thorne.

"He's mine," she said solemnly, "he's mine ; and

his time 's a drawin' nigh. I can't go for to break his heart, as mine's been broke. So if silence 'll leave him in his bed, Master Falk——"

"Thank you, Jael!" he answered, eagerly seizing her hand, "I knew you would come to think as I do."

"No, no—not that, sir!" said Jael, drawing back, and covering her hands with her apron. "Neither hand nor money for me. It's enough to have bought my tongue, or taken it force-ways, like as you've done already. I've promised, and that's enough."

"I know it's enough." He began to turn to go. "And no one else knows—has heard the tale?" he asked, hesitating.

"Jonathan Cleare knows," said Jael.

Aaron's heart sank.

"He were here when she spoke out," said Jael. "But 'e needn't to fear him. He'll tell no man. It's Jael Thorne as ye had to fear; and now—you've got your way with her."

Her head sank again upon the table; and as Aaron Falk went out, it was the wailing sound of her voice, and not the bells of Shelbourne, that haunted his way home.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ONE MAN WHO KNEW.

THERE was one man, then, who knew in Shelbourne. It was a strange fate that brought Aaron Falk face to face with that one man as he went home.

He did not know whether to be glad or sorry when he saw Jonathan coming straight towards him in the field beyond Josiah Thorne's lane.

Men of Jonathan's type do not lose themselves for long in fits of abstraction, as better educated and less physically powerful men do. If he could have been in a reverie, he was in one now. But he only showed it by kicking up a stone meaninglessly here and there in the stubble, and walking for a yard or two with his head down. But he was quite conscious of where he was, of the smoke rising over the orchard from the Thornes' cottage, and of his own unwonted absence from church. Why he had not gone he could hardly have told. He only knew he felt restless and disquieted. Andrew was clear. But who was this that had taken the cloak of blame and shame instead?

Mr. Falk, Jonathan's best friend—barring Andrew—and the friend of all the Shelbourne folk ; who would fall next, and, from being a pattern of respectability, become capable of any low or cowardly deed ? Jonathan's faith in men was sorely shaken. He felt he could not go to church and listen to Mr. May's counsels, to turn to him that had smitten one cheek the other also. For it was not his own cheek that had been smitten now. But he had been injured deeply through his friend, his David, who lay helpless in the Harper ward. That Andrew should have ruined Priscilla had seemed bad enough to him ; but that Andrew's love should be ruined by another man—and that man Mr. Falk, who might have known better—this Jonathan felt it hard to forgive.

He had as great a shrinking from seeing Aaron Falk as the culprit himself could have had from meeting Jonathan. He had an almost childish dislike to giving pain, and to see Aaron and not speak out his mind he knew was impossible. And then, with him as with Jael, indeed as with half the people in the place, there was the weight of many obligations to lay a ban upon his speech. Many a time had Mr. Falk's gig taken Mrs. Cleare to Hepreth, in the days when there was still a chance of her hearing being restored by attendance at the hospital. Many a bottle of medicine and bowl of broth had found its way to

the elder Jonathan, when his son was away, and the sickness of the husband drained the poor wife's resources. Of late such favors had not been needed. Jonathan earned good wages, and his parents needed for nothing. But between the young blacksmith and the prosperous brewer a relationship of mutual courtesies and goodwill had sprung up; and on a footing more palatable by far to Jonathan than that of benefactor and recipient.

But once full in Mr. Falk's way, Jonathan was not likely to avoid him, however much he might wish it. He saw the craven, cowed look that lurked under a seeming indifference of manner.

"Good morning, Jonathan," jauntily.

"Good morning, sir," curtly.

Jonathan was not going to help him out of his difficulty, that was clear.

"I understand you've been at Thorne's," said Mr. Falk; "it's a bad business this about—the girl—I understand you've been there—you heard her accuse me, eh? I don't understand it. I—"

"I didn't understand it either, sir, before this. But I think I see my way through it now. At least I see this, that you've been at Josiah's cottage. I expect, if you've business there, sir, that what 'Scilla said's true. An honest man that heard a scandal wouldn't go sneaking to the place where it lies, I take

it—let alone the man that *can't* have heard the scandal, by reason that it isn't put abroad yet."

"Jonathan," said Mr. Falk, boring a hole in the ground with his stick, and speaking rapidly and with agitation, "if it's quite true that no one knows yet, except you, then I feel I can depend on your honor. Jael has given me her word; so it rests with you whether you'll injure an old friend by spreading a slander that 'll do only harm and no good."

"Ay, harm, it *will* do," said Jonathan. "But as to holding my tongue about it, Mr. Falk, sir, that's another matter."

Aaron looked anxious again. The pinched look came back to his features as he stood looking at the green wood, and the far blue hills, and Hephreth lying under its blue veil of smoke in the valley. Jonathan's tone was too resolute and defiant for his peace. He must knock under with this man if he were to make any way with him.

"We are all apt to make mistakes—to—" he began, deprecatingly.

"Yes," Jonathan interrupted him, "we are all apt to do wrong, and to do foul deeds, some of us. But when it's done, I think the English of it 's the best—and I don't know the tongue as calls ruining another man's sweetheart, and she's not all there—a *mistake*. Mistakes can mostly be undone, sir. But these mis-

takes, as you call 'em—they need a piece of stuff as God Almighty's not wove yet, to mend 'em."

Aaron Falk went on boring the hole in the ground without answer. After a time, he said, when Jonathan moved as if he were going—

"I believe I can depend on you to keep silence—not to spread the slander. What good it will do you or Hephreth folk, to have it blazed abroad, I don't see; and it would ruin a respectable man's character."

Jonathan, in spite of himself, gave a low laugh of contempt.

"*Respectable !*" he said, between his teeth, turning again to go.

"Jonathan," said Mr. Falk, "I've done you many good turns. I ask you this one favor—to keep this secret. I don't deny it—I believe it's true. I wish to God it weren't. But as it is, the harm is done. I throw myself on your goodness, Jonathan."

Insensibly he fumbled with his purse, but he knew too well the man he was dealing with to dare to bring it out. If Jael had spurned money, what would not Jonathan do at the bare suggestion ?

"How did you buy over Jael's tongue ?" asked Jonathan, bluntly. "*That* would not do much with her," he said, pointing to the trouser pocket in which Aaron kept his hand, and from which a jingle had once or twice been heard to come.

Like a chidden child, Aaron removed his hand.

"I only appeal to your good heart," said he, and his voice was low and trembling.

The tone touched Jonathan—so did the words of the appeal, in which no word was said of past favors.

"Look here, sir, I don't want to harm you. I believe, to have done as you've done 's as heavy a load as ever a man can carry. I don't want to pull you down in other folks' eyes—I don't. But look here, sir,"—he lifted his arm and pointed to Hepreth in the valley—"the man as you've wronged 's lying there, sir, and he 's my mate. We've been mates since ever we wore pinafores, and went to get our schooling together. And it 's the thought of him as made me say I couldn't abear to hold my tongue. What am I to say, sir, when he asks me, in the name o' God, who it is that 's ruined 'Scilla?"

There was no answer. Jonathan went on—"I tell you what it is, sir, so long as I can keep it from Andrew I'll keep it: it'll be a deal the best for him as well as you. But if the time should come as I *must* speak out for the sake of Andrew—that day I'll speak. But," he added, watching the pallor that had spread again over Mr. Falk's straight, fine features—"that day I'll come and tell *you* first, sir, and there's my word."

And Jonathan strode away, leaving Aaron Falk still standing, bewildered, by the hole in the stubble.

He quickly came to himself, and overtook Jonathan.

"If ever," he said, "I can do anything for you in any way, you'll let me know, Jonathan. I'll do it, whatever it is—and there's my hand upon it."

"Well, it's not for me to forgive, or not to forgive," said Jonathan, holding out his hand—and so they parted.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FALLING OF THE LEAF.

SO the sweetness of autumn went by, and Shelbourne clothed herself in russet, and then sadly began to disrobe for the coming winter; and the ground lay thickly carpeted with yellow elm leaves, and brown beech leaves; and the limes on either side the Red Inn shed theirs in beautiful bright patches of gold and green, with dark spots here and there, harlequin fashion, half the leaf gold, half green, only that the gold melted into the green as no loom ever yet wove it. Perhaps the mediæval monks came nearer to it than any craftsman, in their wondrous blendings of color and form on the pages of the old missal. And they had learnt it straight from God and nature.

And Aaron Falk's secret was still kept.

But to him, and to some of the simple souls of Shelbourne, the sweet rhythm of the season was jarred and out of tune. The stillness that seemed at the falling of other years to speak to them of peace

spake now of sadness and trouble, and the inscrutable ways of God.

They could not have told you this, perhaps, but they felt it. Jael, Jonathan, Aaron Falk, Andrew—one man had sinned, and all these must suffer with him. Jonathan, who thought as well as suffered, felt it was easier now to believe that hard saying in the Book—"By *one* man came sin."

But the trouble and the struggle was fought out in secret, in the inner life of these four. Jonathan stood at his anvil all the day; Andrew lay upon his back in Hepreth hospital, and was silent; Jael gathered the forgotten apples, and sold them as she had done every year—and sorely now she wanted the little money they brought her; and Aaron Falk, to all appearance the most unmoved of all, went about the brewery, and the yard, and to the big square pew in church—to Mr. May's house sometimes, not often—everywhere except to Jonathan's forge—and before all the world he could hold up his head, except before these two men. With Mr. May he still tried to do so; with Jonathan, if he ever came across him, which was seldom now, he did not even try.

It was a very strange feeling to him, this new awe of Mr. May. Hitherto he had felt so superior, as a man, to the curate with his hundred pounds a year, his threadbare alpaca coat, his empty, unfurnished

house, and his gentle, almost feeble manner, and narrow chest. And Mr. May was under such obligations to him. He could hardly have lived through some winters without the brewer's timely gifts of port wine and stout. And the curate invariably treated him with such deference. How could it be that Aaron Falk should ever fear him?

Ah, Aaron Falk! you will understand by-and-by, if you have not thought it out already, that the manly man, and the man of the broad chest, the man of the fat purse and the respected name—all these must bow down at last before the true man, who has the fear of God before his eyes, and has kept His paths straight. Before the richer or the poorer man, the stronger or the weaker, no man who has a right to the name will feel afraid. But before the better and nobler man, that is a different thing altogether.

One day, just when November had set in, and the days were getting short, and the air damp and chilly, Jonathan was standing in the workshop, with one foot upon the slake-tub, manipulating a shapeless piece of iron with pincers. The forge fire had got low, as the day's work was nearly over; and when a voice called at the door, "Good evenin' to you, Jonathan," he could not see who it was that spoke, but the voice startled him. Could it be Andrew come home?

It was not Andrew, but it was Andrew's mother. Martha Male, in her Sunday best, was standing, plump and comely, in the doorway.

"Have you been at Hepreth?" asked Jonathan, taking his foot off the tub, and passing his fingers through his thick brown hair, which was a way he had when he asked a question, and felt a little shy about the answer. He knew Andrew would reproach him for not having been to see him for so long.

"Yes, I've been. And Andrew, he's a-comin' out Saturday. He's a-gettin' on wonderful, he is."

"I'm right glad to think he's getting well, missus," said Jonathan.

"And him suffered so. Wonderful he suffered, I suppose, when the bones was a-gingerin' together. And he's proper sadly. He don't seem to have no 'dacity in him. I'd take it kind if you'd come in and spend th' evenin' Saturday, jest to keep his spirits up a bit."

"I'll come in, missus," said Jonathan, relieved that the proposal was not that he should have a *tête-à-tête* with his mate, who would be sure to question him about Priscilla. For the first time in his life, he feared being alone with Andrew. Saturday after Saturday had passed, and he could not go to Hepreth. To sit there by Andrew's bed, and be questioned and cross-questioned, as he had been the one time he

took courage and went, about a fortnight after he had heard the truth, was more than he could face. He knew that he could not break his promise to Mr. Falk; he knew that if he could, it would be the worst thing possible for Andrew. He knew what Andrew was when his blood was up. Mr. Falk and Andrew could not live in the same place, if once the truth came to Andrew's knowledge. So Jonathan had evaded his eager questionings as best he might, and had kept away from Hepreth.

"I'm glad the gal's agoin' to be put away before he comes home agin, I am," said Mrs. Male, setting her ample person on one of Jonathan's narrow benches. "It'll be a deal better for him, it will. He were al'ays wonderful foolish after her, and his father nor me never liked it."

"Put away?" repeated Jonathan, in astonishment.

"She ain't a-goin' to be kep' at home, not likely. Didn't you hear as the old gen'leman's a-taken worse, and Jael, poor gal, she can't leave him, not to 'arn a shillin'? And how's she to keep 'Scilla, and feed and clothe 'em all? It's a bad job, it is, as that there man as has behaved so shameful can't be found out. If it were my gal, I'd walk the country but I'd find him out. If he were breathin' the Lord's air anywheres, I'd lay hands on him. But she's as stiff-necked, she is; they tells me she

would not tell nobody, not if her mother thrashed her life out o' her."

"But what is to become of her?" asked Jonathan, as much to turn the conversation as in his real anxiety for 'Scilla's fate.

"What's to come on her? Why, I suppose what comes to all gals as goes the way she's gone. The work'us to be sure."

And Mrs. Male bundled up her skirt, and showed her neatly-laced thick boots and clean petticoats as she stepped out of the shed, wishing Jonathan "Good evening."

The soft-hearted woman had something of that hard side to her character that unerring respectability is apt to wear.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW WOULD ANDREW TAKE IT ?

SO he was coming home on Saturday, was Andrew; and little 'Scilla was going to the workhouse.

There was some need for Jonathan to ask how Andrew would take the news. The very name of workhouse had an ill-odor for such respectable folks as Andrew came of. Would he resent the indignity for 'Scilla, and try to help her from it? Or would he feel it was best that she should be "put away," lost as she now must be to him?

Even Jonathan did not know his mate well enough to answer. He had never been in love, though he had a great respect for women. How he should decide, if he were divided between his love and his honor as Andrew was, he could not tell. On the whole, he thought he should persuade Andrew to let 'Scilla go. It would be best on all accounts. Jonathan had enough selfishness to be aware it would be best for him. The scandal would soon die out when the poor girl was out of sight; and the subject, little by

little, would be dropped, even between himself and Andrew. Jonathan could not get over the feeling of uneasiness that laid hold of him when he knew that Andrew's secret was in his keeping, and that to Andrew he could not tell it. He always fell back upon the old argument—it would be the worst thing possible for Andrew to know. The wrong was over and done; and if Aaron Falk were killed for his sin, it would not give back 'Scilla to her lover. And yet Jonathan could not convince himself. He felt somehow as if, against his will, he had become a traitor to his mate.

Then his thoughts turned to poor Jael; and as he raked out the forge fire and drew on his coat, he made up his mind to go and see her and 'Scilla. Andrew would take it unkindly if he could tell him nothing of them when he came home. And Jonathan had never been to the 'Thornes' cottage since that early morning, six weeks before, when he had stood on the landing, and heard the sad whisper that came so audibly through the twilight and the stillness.

Instead of having any feeling of affinity with Jael, because of this secret that he shared with her, he had rather disliked the idea of seeing her. She had promised, and he had promised; and nothing had happened to alter the condition of that promise. Very nearly all, if not all, Shelbourne had accepted Andrew's

denial, when they heard how he had suffered when the news of the birth of 'Scilla's child reached him. The sin of leading 'Scilla astray they thought him quite capable of. The sin of hypocrisy, of feigning a grief he could not feel if the child were his,—this they acquitted him of. They were not a cringing, hypocritical race. Whatever their faults were, they were straightforward, and on the surface. It did them credit that almost with one consent they exonerated Andrew, and laid the blame on some tramp, some ill-conditioned fellow, who—worse luck—had escaped scot free.

And then to encourage them all in this view, there was the constant asseveration of Jael that Andrew was innocent. If she had not got good reason for saying so, why should *she* protect him?

But resolutely Jael stuck to it, that Andrew *was* innocent. And, though it was the hardest pang she could now be open to, she had made up her mind to "put away" 'Scilla.

Jonathan, knocking at the door, and going in, found the girl on a low stool by the fire, with her baby on her knees. She was smiling over it, singing snatches of old cradle-songs, swaying herself to and fro, while she rocked it to sleep.

Jonathan stood looking at her. She looked up, too, and smiled radiantly at him.

‘Well, ‘Scilla,’ he said, not knowing what else to say. It was the first time he had spoken to her since things had been so sadly changed.

“Well, Jonathan,” she said, still smiling.

“Is your mother in?” he asked.

“Yes, I think so,” said ‘Scilla, dreamily, lost again in admiration of the flannel bundle she was holding.

Jael’s heavy foot moved across the garret above, and began to come down the ladder.

“Be that you, Jonathan? The sight o’ you makes me of a tremble, though I dun’ know as why it should. But I haven’t set eyes on you since that day as—well, well, it’s no use for to go back to th’ old troubles. There’s plenty o’ new uns al’ays to hand.”

She brushed the back of her hand across her eyes; and, though she began rubbing the table briskly with a cloth, Jonathan could see the broad shoulders did tremble.

“Sit down, missus, won’t you?” he asked.

She leant against the table, and folded her arms, from which the worn sleeves had been turned up. The brown, deeply-lined face had taken many fresh pencillings in these past weeks. There was an unutterably sad, hopeless expression now, that had taken the place of that keen, hawk-like look of other days.

“The old gentleman’s sadly, I hear,” said Jonathan.

"Sadly? yes, proper sadly. The damp and the cold's ta'en him wonderful."

"How long has he been ill?"

"Ill he's been this many a year. But I never see'd him not like this afore. He's druckened ever sin' that there"—pointing to 'Scilla's baby—"come in the world."

"Did he take it much to heart, missus?" asked Jonathan, seeing the girl was still wholly engrossed in the baby.

"Not so much that, I don't think. On'y Martha Male she tells me as a new life a-comin' in a house mostly saps the old life as is nigh a-goin' out. I makes no account o' what she says, I don't; but she's right sometimes, is Martha Male."

"Perhaps it'll be best, then, missus," said Jonathan, cautiously—for he did not know how Jael would take it—"that 'Scilla and the little one should be out of the way for a while, so long as the old gen'leman's so poorly."

Jael stood with her arms folded, her small brown hands pushed up under each turned-up sleeve of the opposite arm. She made no answer; but her stern mouth closed a little more firmly.

"Missus," said Jonathan, beckoning her to the door; and they went out, and stood in the narrow, disorderly garden-path, where the brambles laid themselves

over Jael's skirts, and tugged at them when she moved. "Missus, you know there be many of us that would be glad to help you so far as we could. Mother 'ud rather take poor 'Scilla any day—to pay her a visit, you see—rather than that she should go to the 'house.' But you know how thick we live—only the bedroom for father and mother, and a make-shift bed in the other room for me. But if there's anything I could do to help you, missus, and if you'd take it kind from an old friend, and not think offence, it would do me good to help you. It couldn't be much, because father's past work now, with his illness, and I've to keep them both and myself. But a little's better than nothing. I think I could promise you something regular every week, if it was ever so little—just to keep you from putting away 'Scilla."

Jonathan had forgotten all his prudence for himself, the dilemma that the girl's removal would help so to free him from; he had even for a time forgotten Andrew, and how hard it would be for him, poor fellow, to be always seeing 'Scilla. The sight of Jael's stern face, that spoke of a greater anguish than showers of tears from other women would have done—this had made him forget for a time everything except his wish to save 'Scilla to her. But as he

came back to himself, and to some of his old prudence, Jael said—

“Jonathan, 'e be as good a friend as ever woman had. My heart's hard, but it 'ud need to be harder not to feel the sharp edge of kind words like yourn. But beholden to no man I can't be, Jonathan : it goes agin me. If there's one as should pay, it's him as wronged my gal. But I won't touch his money, and I can't touch yourn. Work I can't, not to earn a fardin'. Leave fa'der I can't—he's as helpless as any babby, he is ; and 'Scilla, she ain't got eyes for no one but the child. And though I tells on'y you, Jonathan—and you needn't tell it again—I'm not the woman I used to be ; I can't do not as I used to could. I'm taken wonderful sharp with the pain here”—and she held her hand upon her heart—“and it's like to take my life from me when it comes like that.”

“So you think it's best for 'Scilla to go, missus ?” said Jonathan.

“Best ?” she answered. “I don't know as there's any best for the like o' me. It's all worse and worse, I take it. But it ain't no use to go agin the Lord ; and starve at home we can't, Jonathan.”

“It's a bad place for young girls,” said Jonathan, more to himself than to her. “I suppose the old gen'leman wouldn't like to go himself—”

Jael broke in furiously—

"*Fa'der* a go in the 'house'? *Me* put away *fa'der* in that place? It breaks my heart to put 'Scilla there—she as is happy anywheres, so long as she has the babby. But me to put *fa'der* there—as if it warn't me as has brought him to shame first—and my gal arter me. No, no, the Lord guv' me my *fa'der*, but I take it the devil guv' me 'Scilla. And now," she went on—her voice falling to that low wailing tone so unusual with her, seldom, if ever, heard by any one but Jonathan—"now it's no good for me to fight against the Lord no more. One on 'em I must put away, and who 'll it be but 'Scilla?"

The tears came into her dry eyes at last.

"I don't think she'll fret, missus," said Jonathan.

He was watching Priscilla, through the window, tossing her baby gently up and down in a rapture of delight before the fire.

"Fret? Not she. That comforts me. She don't fret for nothin', so long as she's the babby."

"And when will you send her?" he asked presently, growing more courageous.

"I dun' know. It 'ud best be soon."

"Missus, 'Drew's coming home Saturday. It 'ud be best for him not to happen on 'Scilla."

"That's right, Jonathan, that's right," she answer-

ed. "My gal shan't put another thorn in his pillow, if I can help it. I'll get the order, and she can go on Friday."

But the order did not come in time.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE JOURNEY HOME.

“ I THOUGHT I'd look in and tell you, missus,” said Jonathan, at Martha Male's door that night, “that 'Scilla's going to the 'house' on Friday, and so 'Drew needn't come on her at all.”

Martha Male did not quite enter into the delicacy of Jonathan's feelings for his friend.

“ Well, happen on her he'll have to, come sooner, come later. But I'm glad she's a-goin'. It might upset him like, seein' the gal goin' about. He did keer for her, did 'Drew.”

“ I think we needn't tell him straight off that she's gone—and to the 'house,'” said Jonathan, trying to smooth the way as far as possible for his mate. He knew Martha was not reticent, nor very sensitive, though she had as kind a heart as ever beat under a purple cross-over.

“ Bless you, lad, he ain't made o' sugar-candy. But it's not me as 'ill want to put him out the first night he sits aside us agin. But I'm glad you've looked in, Jonathan, 'cause I'd somethin' to ast you, and I'll

take it a great favor if you'll do it. It ain't so much for me as for 'Drew, and he's ta'en it very hard as you've not been a-nigh him this long time, and he shut up in the 'orspital with his poor bones a-gingerin' together."

Jonathan felt a little uncomfortable, and made some hazy excuse. It satisfied Mrs. Male, however, intent on her request.

"Well, it's this as I wanted to ast you. 'Drew's a-comin' home Saturday, you see, and however he's to git out I dun know. He can't walk not many hundred yards yet, he can't; and to hire a cart from Hepreth 'ud come to a terrible deal, it 'ud. But his father and me we been a-thinkin' as you is so friendly like with Mr. Falk, that you'd ast him if he'd lend Abra'm the light cart Saturday, and then he'd go fetch 'Drew hisself. Mr. Falk's so wonderful kind al'ays, I don't think as he'd dissannul us."

Jonathan hesitated a few moments before he said—

"You had best ask him yourself, missus, I think."

Martha Male put down her knitting and looked at Jonathan.

"Then you won't do it for 'Drew, though Mr. Falk makes as much o' your little finger as of Abra'm and me body and soul put together?"

"I can't do it, missus," said Jonathan.

"Well, then, it's the first time as ever you said

'No' when it was somethin' for 'Drew as you could do. Good night," she added, indignantly, rising to see him out of the door, "I ain't one as 'll ask twice."

"I'm sorry I can't, missus," said Jonathan. "I'd do it if I could, but I've a good reason why I can't."

Martha Male shut the door, and sat down, ruffled and disconcerted, to her stocking.

"Don't be so hasty, old 'oman," said her husband. "He telled 'e as he'd got a reason. If he hadn't, he'd do it for 'Drew."

"Oh, he's not as he used to be to 'Drew, he isn't. Not been a-nigh him since ever such a time. There's somethin' as there usedn't to be about Jonathan. And I take this very unkind, I do. However 'll my poor boy get out Saturday?" And Martha Male began to cry.

"He'll get a 'lift' easy—no fears o' him," said Abraham. "There's enough troubles for every day wi'out hailing them that belongs to the day after to-morrow, or next week. One 'ud think 'Drew had got another mischief, instead of comin' home hale and hearty with his leg as whole as yourn."

Meanwhile Jonathan was going home troubled and puzzled. Were these the sort of difficulties he was to find himself in every day? Martha misunderstood him; perhaps 'Drew would, too, and think him

changed and unkind. He could not blame 'Drew if he did. And yet his tongue was tied, not only by his promise to Mr. Falk, but by his own conviction that to tell what he could tell would be the worst thing possible not only for Heprath and Mr. Falk but for Andrew himself.

And as to asking Mr. Falk to send for Andrew, Jonathan felt it was impossible. The very idea stuck in his throat. If Mr. Falk would have done it a hundred times over (and perhaps he would not have liked to refuse), Jonathan felt that a hundred times over he would have to decline it. Send for 'Drew in Mr. Falk's cart, knowing what *he* knew? It would be an insult to his mate, and none the less an insult because 'Drew would not *know* it had been offered to him. "I'd carry him out on my back a deal sooner," said Jonathan. And he went, still troubled and worried, to bed. So Saturday came round, and nothing had been sent to meet Andrew. He was to have had a letter from home, if anything could be arranged for him; and when no letter came, and the morning broke clear and sunny, for all it was November, he put his best foot forward, and with a comforter round his neck, a stick in his hand, and a few clothes in a bundle in the other, he started to walk part of the way home at least, depending on a "lift," which he was safe enough to get. He had only had a few turns

in the hospital garden since the day when he had been carried along this road, sick with pain and the jolting of the cart.

How sweet the air seemed ! It was fresh, touched by the hand of winter. And the trees he had left in leaf were bare, and only a robin here and there twittered from the hedges. But to breathe and be free again was sweet. How much sweeter it might have been ! In other days, home-coming from Hepreth, or from any long day's work, meant a good tea at home, at the clean table with its snowy cloth ; and afterwards, a walk with 'Scilla.

Now, there would be the mother, the home, the clean cloth, the tea, but not the walk with 'Scilla. And the lack of this last seemed to take the sweetness out of it all. His heart was sad and heavy. There was only the sense of being free in body, the sense of returning health to carry him along. And hidden in his heart, hardly known even to himself, Andrew carried a hope—the hope of seeing 'Scilla.

He did not reason with himself as to what would be best for him ; he did not argue that it would be worse than useless for him to see her now. He only was aware that something led him on to Shelbourne, as it had led him home so many times in old days, in spite of the sad heart he knew he carried. Hoping

against hope, without hope—that was Andrew's case.

Just outside Hepreth, he halted and sat down on the kerbstone to rest. A long white building stood on the left of the road, facing him as he sat. The windows were large and in straight rows; painfully straight rows, where all beauty had given place to order. Four straight white walls enclosed a square yard in front of the building. Four other straight walls adjoined these four. They divided the space into two bare courts; and these divided the house also into two parts. There was a bench in each court. On one bench sat a row of men like sparrows, all alike in fustian and blue shirts. On the other bench sat three women, each with a baby in her arms. They also were all alike—in blue-striped dresses and white caps.

The men had some pebbles on the bench, and were trying to play a game with them. The very dropping of a pebble was a relief in that awful monotony of men all alike, walls all alike, doors and windows all alike. The pebbles were not all alike, when you came to look closely at them. Perhaps that was why the men liked to play with them, and handle them.

The women sat looking at their babies: three little babies, all alike. Their red arms and legs, their little

blue cotton dresses, their oiled flaxen hair upon every head. To the mothers they did not look all alike, which was well. Perhaps that was partly why they liked to look at them, and play with them.

That was Hephreth workhouse.

CHAPTER XX.

"AY, I SAW HER."

BUT the great white building, and the bare walls, had no associations for Andrew. Thank God none of his kith and kin had ever been there. He looked at it as respectable folk look at prison windows, wondering at and pitying those behind the bars.

Then he took up his bundle again, that he had laid down beside him, and limped along slowly, looking out for some friendly traveller on the road who would give him a "lift."

He was not long in being overtaken by an empty cart that belonged to Mr. Jonas, the landlord of the Red Inn. The carter was well known to Andrew, and there was no demur about taking the limping wayfarer up. On the contrary, the old man got down and helped Andrew in, setting a heap of empty sacks in the corner for him to sit upon; and, stretching his broken leg out gently along the cart—

"It's best for 'e to sit at the top like," he said, as he settled Andrew into his corner with his back to the horse; "there's more hills to go up 'an there is to

go down 'tween this and Shelbourne—and it ain't pleasant to be lyin' down feet up'ards. Tell me if I goes too fast, and jolts you. There ain't no hurry as I knows of."

They did not go too fast. At every hill old Tom got out and led his horse, or walked beside it, meditating on simple things, or perhaps on nothing; and Andrew watched Hepreth lying farther and farther behind him, till the tall white hospital lost itself among the smaller houses, and in the blue veil of smoke.

He was very tired even after his short walk. His limbs were far wearier, from long inactivity, than the stout legs of old Tom would be at night, when he threw his smock off after a hard day's work, and a journey to Hepreth and back—so he lay in the cart and did not care to speak, hardly to think. He watched the hedges slipping by, the bare fields, the straight chalk road. Sometimes he watched the pattern worked on old Tom's smock, when the carter fell a little behind at some hill. Most of all he looked at the pale blue sky, in which a pale November sun was riding; the bare elm branches stretched across it; and below was the underwood of bramble, not bare yet, but brown and red and many-colored, clothing the copses for yet a little while.

And now and then there was a traveller to pass upon the road. The Hepreth photographer, with his

little donkey-cart, going out to "take views," now that the trees were bare, and the beauties of brick-work and stone showed at their fullest their naked perfections. A woman or two coming from market. Ben Bower, with one of Mr. Falk's drays full of casks, going in.


Ben opened his big eyes when he saw 'Drew. 'Drew was the hero for the time being of Shelbourne.

"Be you better?" he called out, waking up out of his astonishment, but not waiting to hear the answer, though he turned round upon a cask and stared after the hero for a while.

If he had waited he would not have heard the answer. Andrew made no answer.

For, just then, past the cart went a woman's figure. Tall, girlish, slight, in a soft brown shawl that was wrapped round—not her only, but something she carried in her arms. Her face was bent over something; she was peeping at it under the corner of her shawl.

She stood still a moment, not noticing the cart at all; but turning sideways, with her bright lovely face set against the straight white road, she put her foot upon a stone, while she lifted the little bundle on her arm, drew the shawl closer round it, pressed it nearer to her heart, stooped once and kissed it, then turned away from Shelbourne again, and walked on.



And Andrew lay still in old Tom's cart, and knew that it was 'Scilla that had passed him by. And yet he never moved, had never tried to move. The numbness that had been in his tired limbs seemed to have crept higher, to his heart. A dimness came over his eyes. The white road, the elm branches, the shifting hedges, the woman's figure, all passed out for a moment in darkness. He knew the feeling, for he had felt it once before, when they had lifted him out of the cart at Hepreth hospital, after his leg was broken. And he roused himself, with a strong effort, when he knew now that, in womanish fashion, he was "faint." He was not himself yet, he said to himself, as he took hold of the side of the cart and gripped it.

And just then, looking to the left, he saw that they were passing a deep glade in the copse, where in spring the blue hyacinths used to grow. They were all gone now; only the withered bents covered the ground with a thin shroud-like covering.

Andrew was no poet; but the thought came across him, could this be the same world that was God's world in May?

"I'll walk from here, master, and thank you," he said to Tom, when they reached the Red Inn: "if you'll give me a hand out of the cart. My leg's wonderful stiff still."

"I'll hand you when you're at your own door," said Tom, imperturbably driving on.

All Shelbourne looked out of its windows to see 'Drew, the hero, coming home. Little children, playing on the green, rushed to their mothers, and cried shrilly that "'Drew was a-comin' past."

Martha Male, who had been watching at the window for two hours, and was very uneasy, had, of course, happened to go into the bakehouse just as Andrew arrived. So on his stick he hopped through the house, and out at the back door, where he came upon his mother unexpectedly.

"If I didn't think as it was the ghost of him, and not him hisself, I'm not a woman alive," she said afterwards to a neighbor. "Ill in the 'orspital he did look; but to see him when he comed home, it 'ud have turned a cask o' beer, let alone his mother. His hands, they's like a babby's hand—and a babby as has been brought up by the bottle too. And as for his arms and legs, there isn't a blessful morsel o' flesh on 'em, not as you could pinch with tweezers. His bones, they *is* gingered together; but, dearie me, it's took all his life and flesh, too, to do it. That it has, I'm sure."

No one doubted Martha Male when she said, decisively, "*That* it has, *I'm sure*." Her words carried weight with them; perhaps because her person was

so portly. No one likes to contradict a large woman, however easily she may be melted to tears.

There is little need to say Martha Male cried for a full half-hour while she looked at Andrew. Then she bethought herself of his already over-cooked dinner.

More to please his mother than because he was hungry, he eat some of the hard suet pudding she put before him, with a slice of pork.

And afterwards, when she had tied a clean spotted handkerchief round his throat, and had got him to "set his feet upon the fender," she allowed him, as she expressed it, to "humor hisself."

And so till tea-time he sat over the fire, tired and silent. A cup of tea did him good, and he roused a little at his father's home-coming.

"But he's wonderful down-hearted, he is," said his mother. "I hope as Jonathan 'll cheer him up a bit; for all he was so unkind about the 'lift' from Hephreth."

CHAPTER XXI.

"THE LITTLE RIFT."

JONATHAN did not hurry home from his forge that evening, nor from home to the Males' house.

He wanted to see Andrew again, and yet he could not help wishing to avoid it. If there were to be a cross-fire over his head all the evening on the one painful subject, he felt he could hardly make the evening short enough. He felt he *could* not look ignorant when he knew everything. He had never been schooled to act a part, and he hated the thought of having to do it now. Of all things he hated the feeling of not being open and at his ease with Andrew. His great hope was that Martha Male would forbear to speak on the subject of 'Scilla till Andrew was stronger. But it was a piece of discretion he hardly dared to expect.

When his mother had cleared away the tea things, and he had lifted the great black kettle off the fire, and filled the little wooden tub for her to wash up the cups and plates, as he did every night, Jonathan felt he had better go.

His heart warmed as he went up the Males' garden

path at the thought of seeing 'Drew. For a moment he forgot that there was anything to fear or avoid, as he knocked at the door and saw his mate's honest face, pale and thin, but still the same face, lifted up and turned towards him from the corner by the fire.

A quiet light came at the same time over the pale face at the sight of Jonathan. He stretched out his hand to meet the large brown sinewy hand held towards him.

"Well, 'Drew."

"Well, Jonathan."

That was all, but it was quite enough.

Mrs. Male drew forward a chair. "Take a seat, Jonathan," she said, wiping her eyes, and forgetting her resentment when she saw her boy and Jonathan together agreed.

Jonathan sat down.

"How do you think he looks?" asked Martha, scrutinizing Andrew, who sat looking into the fire, rather bashful at being so much considered.

"He don't look much of a man yet, missus," said Jonathan. "We can't expect it yet."

And his eyes fell again on the thin strip of a hand that was lying nerveless on Andrew's knees,—a hand that, a few weeks ago, had been as strong, though not as large as his own.

They talked on in the twilight for an hour or so,

but there was no mention of 'Scilla.' Jonathan had more respect for Martha than he had had before. His mother could hardly have behaved with more discretion—his dear little deaf mother, who never did the wrong thing, and was always as meek and gentle as if she had.

The talk was not very interesting: about Mr. May's cough and Mr. Byles's last symptoms, the new wall the squire was putting up in Sidman's Acre, and such village gossip. Jonathan noticed that it seemed to tire Andrew very much. He sat patiently listening, only easing his leg now and then, or giving the fire a stir for a little variety. But his face looked weary and worn, and he never joined in the conversation.

"'Drew ought to be in his bed, missus," Jonathan said at last.

"The church clock's a-gone eight," said Abraham, quite ready for bed, but feeling cautiously for his wife's opinion. She was playing a little game to-night, and woe be to him if he spoiled it by any false step.

A very innocent game it was, only to leave Andrew and Jonathan together. She felt sure it would do the boy good to have a talk with his friend. One had always been sent for when the other was in trouble since they were boys.

But Jonathan nearly spoiled the game—perhaps not altogether innocently—by rising to say good-night when Mrs. Male had moved to light her candle.

A frown and a wink sent him straight back into his seat. There was something almost threatening in the frown. Jonathan did not quite understand it. Only this much he understood, that it was as much as his place in his hostess' esteem was worth to refuse to sit down again.

"You can have a crack you two when the old folks is a-gone to bed. 'Drew, you'll latch the door after Jonathan, that's a good boy."

"'Drew's very tired," said Jonathan. "I don't think it 'll be kind to keep him out of his bed."

But Andrew looked up and met his friend's eyes. His face said as plainly as words could, "Don't go!" And Jonathan stayed on, and closed the door behind the old folk as they went up the stair together.

"How 'll you get up?" asked Jonathan, looking at 'Drew's broken leg. "I can't help you if you 've got to lock the door after me."

'Drew pointed over his shoulder. "They've made me a bed here on the mattress. It'll save my legs a few days. Sit down, won't you?"

Jonathan sat down again, and they both looked into the fire.

"I've been sorry not to come to see you, 'Drew,"

Jonathan began ; " I couldn't go to Hepreth very well of late."

'Drew said nothing.

" I hope you didn't take it unkindly," he went on. " I'm afraid the time was long while you were in there."

" It *was* long," said 'Drew. Then he was silent a minute before he said : " Time seems heavy when your heart's heavy. It seems a sight of years since I went in that place."

After another pause he went on : " The thing I want for now's to get well and get about again, that I may bottom this as has happened sin' I been gone. You've not heard nothing more I suppose ?" he asked, looking up anxiously.

Jonathan looked into the fire and said nothing.

Andrew believed he was lost in thought about who could have wronged 'Scilla, and he liked Jonathan none the less for it. If he had heard anything, Jonathan would have been the first to tell him.

" And if you're the same man as you used to be," Andrew continued, " you'll help me, too. For if he's alive on this earth, I'll find him and make him suffer for it." His thin lips trembled as he spoke.

" You haven't seen her, Jonathan, have you ?" he asked presently ; " not of late ?"

" Not very late," said Jonathan. He was too much

occupied with thinking how he should answer Andrew's more momentous questions, to know quite what he was saying. He forgot that he had seen 'Scilla only this week. This time he *was* absent, but his friend did not know it.

"Well, I've seen her," said Andrew. The tone of his voice called Jonathan back to himself.

"You've seen her?" he repeated, in astonishment. 'Scilla was to have been in the workhouse the day before. How could Andrew have come across her?

"On the road to-day. She was out walking. She didn't notice me. She never looked at nothing—only at the"—he stopped a minute, and then as if he forced himself to say it—"the child."

He was shading his face now with his hand, partly resting his forehead on it. There was a tenderness and a shame in his voice, that went straight to Jonathan's heart. He sat quite silent now. It seemed as if everything had been summed up in that one word that he had wrung from his lips: all the past, the shame, the hopelessness of the future, *that*, standing between him and his lost love.

"'Drew," said Jonathan, feeling he must speak, "I'd give up thinking and fretting about who it is. It's past and done, and it can't be mended. It won't make it lighter to bear if you find out who it is. I wish you'd be ruled by me in this."

He spoke more earnestly than he thought. He could not help being anxious to dissuade his friend from his worse than useless quest.

Andrew looked up at him with a mixed expression of surprise and pain.

"It 'ud do me *this* good," he said, sternly, "that it 'ud ease my mind to give him—not his deserts, for I couldn't do that—but the nearest thing to it as I could do. It 'ud ease my mind to call him what he is—the biggest villain as ever crawled this earth. It 'ud ease my mind—Jonathan, you've never had a sweetheart," he said suddenly, his voice falling with a kind of pity for his friend, upon whom no 'Scilla had ever smiled.

"'Drew, you'll be making yourself ill," said Jonathan, rising to go ; "I'd best be going."

"Maybe you had," he answered, wearily. And the two friends parted, and neither was happy. What had come to Jonathan, asked Andrew, that he would not help him to find out the man who had ruined 'Scilla ?

CHAPTER XXII.

EVER WIDENING.

‘JONATHAN didn’t stop not long with you,” was Mrs. Male’s comment as she poured out Andrew’s cup of tea the next morning. It was Sunday, and she had both her son and husband to sit down with her to breakfast ; but her usual satisfaction at this was a little marred by the fact, or the fancy, that Andrew looked no happier for “easing his mind” to his friend the night before.

Andrew said little in reply, for there was little to say. But Martha would not let the subject drop.

“He don’t seem to be not as he used to be, don’t Jonathan,” she exclaimed, pouring her tea into the saucer, and sipping it between her sentences. “I can’t get over his not asking Mr. Falk for the light cart to fetch you home. It’s the first time, as I says to him,—and me a sitting there again the chimley,—as he ever said nay when I ast him do somethink for you.”

“He didn’t say nothink as how it was, I suppose?” she continued, with womanish pertinacity, seeing that Andrew would volunteer nothing.

"He said he couldn't do it," was Andrew's answer.

"Well, it's like a man, it is, not to bottom it. My belief is there's somethink dark and misterous about Jonathan, as I can't purtend to understand. God forgive me if I've done him a wrong; but, 'Drew, I can't a help thinkin' it o' times."

"Thinking what?" said 'Drew, setting his cup down and looking wonderingly at his mother.

"Well, look here; don't go to fly at me before you've heerd what I've got to say. I'm a plain woman, and likes plain goings on. Why is it as Jonathan don't come anigh you now same as he used to do? Why can't he do you a turn as well's he used to could? Why," she said, lowering her voice, that Abraham, who was dressing upstairs, might not hear her, nor the next neighbor either, "why does he look shamed-like and awk'ard when any one talks about 'Scilla?"

Andrew's face had flushed suddenly.

"You don't mean to say as you think—" he began hotly, a horrible suspicion creeping into his heart in spite of himself.

"I don't speak not without thinking, 'Drew, depend on't," she interrupted him, persuading herself by her own arguments till what had been till this moment a vague suspicion, became almost a certainty. "It's a strange thing, as the on'y man as folks saw hangin'

about Thorne's cottage that very mornin' as ever was when the news got out about 'Scilla, the on'y man was Jonathan; and what *he* was a-doin' there God A'mighty and himself on'y knows. But in church he wasn't, for I was there with my very eyes. And him that goes there reg'lar every Sunday."

Andrew pushed his chair from the table, and laid down his knife.

"Don't talk no more o' such things," he said; "I don't believe 'em, and what's more, I *won't*."

"Well, I take it very hard, 'Drew," said his mother, wiping her eyes, and putting her saucer back under its cup, "as you'd take what your mother says to you like that: it ain't no account to *me* who it is, so long as it's not you. But I thought I'd best say my say, and you can do as you pleases."

Andrew thought he was carrying all the trouble he could bear already. It seemed there was another blow yet to be dealt him. He didn't believe it; he would not believe it. But the seed of suspicion had been sown. He knew that, and it made him miserable.

He took his hat and stick and went out. He could not bear the house longer. It was Sunday, and he had felt he should like to go to church that day; but he did not know how to go now, and sit by Jonathan. If it were untrue—and it must be untrue—what a

foul thought he was harboring against his mate! I it were true—

Andrew could not bear it longer. Clear it up he must. To Jonathan he could not go. How in the mere suspicion of the thing could he tax him with it? But to Jael he could go. She might throw some light upon it. She *must* know more than other folk. She *must* know if there were anything against Jonathan.

It was a hard struggle to him to face the certainty of seeing 'Scilla. But facing this horrible suspicion all the long Sunday through, was even worse, and with all his dread of meeting the love that was lost to him, he carried still that mad unreasonable longing that hopeless love so often carries with it—the longing to see 'Scilla once more.

He went along very slowly. He could hardly have believed he should be able to walk so far at all. But sometimes his thoughts were so unbearable, they hurried him on in spite of himself. Going back to the few events of the past weeks, everything seemed to lend color to his mother's suspicion.

Jonathan had evaded his questions that one day that he came to see him, after he had told him of 'Scilla's misfortune. And even when he had broken it to him, how embarrassed, almost ashamed, he had been. He had pushed his chair back; he had not looked him in the face as he used to do.

And, then, he had never come again to Hepreth. Saturday after Saturday had passed, and he had lain and watched the door, and Abraham had come often, his mother sometimes, but Jonathan—never.

His mother noticed Jonathan was changed. Could it be all fancy? Had he not seen a change in him last night as they sat together—they who were never happier in old days than when they could have a “crack” together? And last night they had not been at their ease, whatever was the cause of it.

And then, like a wave, there came over Andrew's soul the remembrance of Jonathan's eager words: “Drew, I'd give up fretting and thinking who it is. I wish you'd be ruled by me in this.”

Had there been a meaning in the words, then, that had seemed to Andrew so unintelligible? Was there a key to it now, and had Andrew *found* it?

The perspiration stood upon his forehead—he felt his hand moist on the stick on which he leant.

He was going up the green lane now, stumbling through the cart-ruts, walking with pain and weariness, but still hurrying on. In another moment he was at Josiah Thorne's door.

He lifted the latch: one look into the room showed him 'Scilla was not there.

Jael was. She was sweeping out the little room, in the old thread-bare brown gown, just as in the days

that were gone. But her face was not what it had been. Andrew, agitated as he was, was struck by the change in it.

She stopped sweeping, put her broom down, came forward, and, taking Andrew by the arm, without a word led him to a seat.

She sat down, too ; and they neither of them spoke for some moments : at length, in answer to something she saw in Andrew's face, Jael said :—

“She's not here, 'Drew. You ain't like to see her. She's gone away for a while.”

Andrew drew a long breath. He did not know till then how much he had dreaded seeing 'Scilla. Another moment, and a reaction came. He did not know before how much he had longed to see her. He began to feel the weariness in his limbs, to know how he had overtaxed his feeble strength.

And as Jael sat silent, looking at him, with that worn, grief-stricken face, his courage gave way. The stick fell from his hand on to the floor, and lay there ; and he bowed his head upon the table, laying his head upon his crossed arms. His shoulders heaved. Jael thought once she heard a sound as of a child's sob. And to her eyes the tears came welling, as she looked at Andrew. She had not thought enough of *his* trouble all this time. She could not have believed he would have felt it so. He had always noticed

'Scilla, but she had not thought any one but she herself could have loved the simple girl so much as this.

Presently she got up and laid her hand on the straight, fair brown hair that fell listlessly over his forehead and his arm. Andrew looked up and remembered himself.

"Don't 'e shame, 'Drew," said Jael, "there's no one here but me."

"I wanted to hear about it, missus," he said, speaking firmly, in his own voice. "Tell me all as you can."

"I knowed nothin' of it," she said. "You knowed a deal more o' her doin's than I did, 'Drew. And, God forgive me, I thought it was you as had ruined her. No one 'ud think it could be no one else. You was the on'y one as ever took notice o' my gal."

"I want to come on him, missus," said Andrew, hoarsely; "I want you to help me find him out."

"I can't help you, 'Drew, my poor boy," she answered, looking compassionately at him, and emphasizing the *I*, which gave Andrew the impression that she was as helpless and ignorant as he was. And as *helpless*, indeed, she was.

There was another silence, and then Jael, afraid of what questions he might put next, said—

"Have you seen Jonathan? He's been wonderful kind, he has, in this trouble."

Andrew looked up eagerly.

"You've seen him then, o' late?"

"See'd him one day this last week. He come up here, very thoughtful like, seein' about what was to come o' Scilla. I'd best tell 'e, 'Drew, as no one hasn't telled ye—'Scilla, she's gone in the 'house,' awhile—till so be as fa'der's better—or gone to his grave. I couldn't 'arn the livin', not for 'em all, and me all day with fa'der, now. The parish wasn't willin' to give 'Scilla nothin'. They said as she must come i' the 'house.'"

Andrew was looking dumbly at her; and she went on, trying to smooth it to him.

"Every one was very kind, they was. I ain't got no faults to find with no one. Mrs. Myse, she were up asking would 'Scilla come to the Place, and they'd give her wage, if she'd do what she could. But she wouldn't not leave the babby. She don't keer for nothin' 'cept that. And Jonathan, he were wonderful kind, he were. There wasn't nothin' he wouldn't do for 'Scilla."

Andrew's heart began to beat fast.

"What—what did he say he'd do?" he asked, hurriedly.

"He said first as his mother 'ud keep her, sooner than she should go in the 'house.' But it's him as 'arns all the money, so it were the same as for

him to keep her, poor lad. What's the matter with 'e, 'Drew? what is it as gives you them hot flushes? Them's what I feels o' times here, at my side." And she put her hand upon her heart.

"It's nothin'—go on—what was it as Jonathan said?"

"Arter that, he says, says he, as he'd give me somethink for to help me keep 'Scilla; but, Jonathan, says I—" and then Jael broke off, just in time to save the secret.

Andrew had stood up, and was looking for his stick. He raised a very pale face when he had found it.

"Missus, I can't bear this no longer. I don't know whose done this—but there's a terrible thought come in my mind. For the love of God tell me, if you can tell me—is there——"

Jael catching at the letter of the truth, where the spirit could not be given, answered quickly, "*I can't tell 'e, 'Drew.*"

She knew he took it to mean she did not know. But to her it was no lie, since the words were true. How could she be answerable for the meaning Andrew might put upon them?

She had no misgivings as she sent him away with this answer. Poor Jael! she had been prepared for plainer untruths than this, in the cause of her bed-ridden father.

"God knows I wouldn't tell no lies not without no purpose," she said to herself as she went on sweeping, "on'y to leave fa'der in 's bed."

Andrew walked home as sick at heart as when he came.

No light had been thrown on his terrible misgivings. He could not frame the dread question he had carried in his heart for Jael to reply to.

She had answered it in so far as she could. *She* believed in Jonathan from the bottom of her heart.

"And I believe in him, I do—I believe!" cried poor Andrew to himself, as he limped wearily homewards. But the terrible, haunting trouble was still written in his face. How long must he carry it?

CHAPTER XXIII.

MR. BYLES'S END.

THE falling of the leaf had been a hard time for others than old Josiah Thorne, and the many people who had been in trouble in Shelbourne.

Poor Mr. Byles, who had weathered many winters, while every one had said that each would be his last, began this winter to fade in earnest. He shut himself up more and more, providing an assistant to take his school for him. More and more he retired into his comforter and into his chimney-corner, and more bottles came weekly from the Hepreth chemist.

The washing-stand, the mantelpiece, the chest of drawers, were now thickly tenanted with empty phials; while at least two or three travelled to and fro by the carrier on any stray opportunity, to be filled and refilled all the week through.

But medicines, even the most powerful, fail at last, and a time comes for the most ardent worshipper of Esculapius when the last bottle is uncorked, the bottle that will never be finished, and that will outlive the frail life it was called in to support.

Martha Male was in her bakehouse one December

day, kneading the shapeless lumps of dough, that were to come out of the white heat of the oven light and sweet as bread could be. Andrew was standing by her, leaning on his stick, listlessly watching his mother's plump hands deftly pinching and shaping the week's loaves. He could not work yet; very little reading tired him, and he was as restless as he was dispirited. It was a change to come into the bakehouse and watch the baking, a thing he had never done since he was a boy.

But a neighbor came in and broke the monotony of the long morning.

"Martha," she said, "they've been a lookin' for you everywhere. Master Byles, he's taken bad, and he's a-wanting you. He won't have no one else but you or Jael a-nigh him, and Jael, poor thing, she can't leave home, not now."

"My comfort!" said Mrs. Male, seeing before her a prospect of many weeks, perhaps months, of waiting upon the schoolmaster, who was always "bad," and never much worse. "My comfort, woman! and 'Drew here at home, and no one to do for him, not if I go out a-nursing of other folks. Why ever didn't the poor man never marry, to be a-leavin' of himself to other folk, when he should have them as it 'ud be their dooty to do for him? Well," she said, dubbing a plump forefinger into the middle of each

doughy loaf, and leaving a clean round hole as if it had been done with a walking-stick, "well, I suppose as I must go. Leave the poor man to die in his bed I can't. It 'ud lie forever at my door if I did."

She scraped off the dough that had stuck to her fingers with a sharp piece of stick, and giving her hands a rub with her apron, she "set her hat straight," as she expressed it, and went off to Mr. Byles.

Andrew was very glad to see her back by tea-time, flustered and hot, but evidently not so much in demand as she had expected to be.

"He's proper sadly," she said, taking off her pattens, and smoothing down her hair, from which she had taken her big hat. "But I dun' know as he's like to go off just yet. He's been very nigh as bad before this, and got out of his bed again."

She spread a clean, coarse white cloth on the little table, and arranged the tea-things, and Andrew drew his chair in beside her. Meals were a great event to him now, in his long idle days.

He had cut two slices of bread, and was innocently beginning to eat one when a look on his mother's face stopped him.

"Whatever's the matter?" he asked.

She had turned half her sleeve down before beginning her tea, when something arrested its further progress, and she sat now with the same arm stretched

across the table, pointing at her son's plate, a picture of unyielding fate.

"The matter? Why, to be sure—just look at that there slice of bread?"

"Well—I'm looking," said Andrew.

"And you don't *see*?" she cried; "why, there's a coffin sure and certain a-starin' you in your face!"

"A coffin?" repeated Andrew, feeling very bewildered, and staring round the room with a sense of awe.

"In your bread, you silly," said Martha. "Don't you see that there hole in it? That means a coffin, it does. Ah, it's all very well for young folks like you to laugh, but holes never came in *my* bread wi'out somethink comin' of it. Dearie me, I wish I hadn't got the poor man to send a tiligram to his niece to come and do for him. Do for him no one won't have to do long, that's sartin. The tree isn't a-growin' that'll make that there coffin: no, and it ain't been a-growin' this year or two. And the nails they isn't very far off. No, nor yet's the hammer. No more isn't the screws."

Andrew laughed. It was the first time he had laughed since he came home, but his mother could not forgive him quite, in spite of that.

"Laugh at me you may, 'Drew. Jael she laughed that day as we was a-washin' for Muster Byles, and my soap it slipped three times. And says I, I says,

'Somethink 'll come o' *that*,' says I. And I hadn't not hardly said them words when the neighbors come a-runnin', and says as you had gotten the mischief. You mark me, 'Drew, Muster Byles ain't long for *this* world."

And from Martha Male's omen, even more than from Mr. Byles's drawn blinds, and the news of his increased illness, the report was spread abroad that the schoolmaster was very near his end. Every tongue in the village was set in motion. He had been so long in the place, that the fact of his death, and the idea that a new master would have to come in his place, shook the Shelbourne mind to its foundation.

"The doctor he don't seem to know right what it is," said one of the men of the knot who always gathered near the Red Inn in the evenings, or by the corner near Jonathan's forge. "My missus she says she knows what it is. She's wonderful bad with 't herself o' times. It's the wind-spavines and the digestion."

"That sounds as if it 'ud take a chap off, it does," said another. "A deal of pain isn't it?"

"Spavines mostly is," said the first speaker, with authority.

"My missus," interrupted Abraham Male—and when he spoke every one was silent, for was not Abraham's wife the one woman that was admitted to "do

for" Mr. Byles? and who could know better all about than she did?"—"my missus she don't see as he'll get by it. He's druckened wonderful this winter, he has. The cold took him and nipped him like."

"I don't never remember him a hale man," said the old shoemaker. "Somethink like the minister, al'ays ailing and flibberty. Muster Snape now, as come afore him; he were a masterful man, he were."

In a few nights they had gathered round the forge corner again.

"Well—he's gone, is schoolmaster. Went about four o'clock, they tells me. Went off very quiet like and still."

"He were al'ays a still man. Never meddled with nobody."

"My missus knew as he'd draw off quick," said Abraham. "The candle went out last night when she were a sittin' up. But I make no 'count o' such things, I don't."

Martha Male wiped her eyes when she had seen poor Mr. Byles draw his last breath. They hardly needed wiping, perhaps, but still the action was becoming. At any rate it came naturally to Martha, who had been at many death-beds.

The niece from Yorkshire put on a black dress,—which, indeed, she had come provided with,—packed up Mr. Byles's effects, stood at his grave, wiped her

eyes too, and then started back by train, with a packet of sandwiches, for Yorkshire.

The school door was locked. The children were told they would have holidays, because Mr. Byles was dead. They liked holidays, and they had never cared for Mr. Byles, so they could have but one feeling. The blinds in the master's house were pulled down ; the key was given to Mr. May. The next thing was to supply the master's place.

So, with no more mourning than this, poor Mr. Byles was laid in the churchyard, and passed out of Shelbourne life. Thirty years he had been in Shelbourne, and in those years he had not won the real affection of a single soul.

Deaths like these make us faithless. On some faces immortality is written. But what about the unloved, the unloving, the altogether unlovely who seem neither to merit punishment nor to be worthy of a higher life ?

But, after all, the life is as much a wonder as the hereafter can be. Why do some of us grow up unloved, unloving, and unlovely in the same world that bears such noble souls ?

The answer is not here. We must wait for it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A NINE DAYS' WONDER.

THERE is one good thing about gossip in a small place, where incidents are few and far between. The talk is so strong, so unwearied, so exhaustive, that it soon wears itself out. Everything having been conjectured, and more than everything related, nothing remains to be said —the torrent pours itself out, and dries up.

So that by Christmas the talk about 'Scilla would pretty well have ceased, had no later event come to banish her from the village memory. But this incident came, in the death of Mr. Byles; and Andrew's love story and 'Scilla's wrongs were as a page turned over in the annals of Shelbourne.

A far more fruitful subject for conversation was the death of the schoolmaster. For it provided an endless expanse of wonder, supposition, guess, and inquiry as to his successor.

And for all he was so little lamented, it did not seem to be a very easy thing to fill Mr. Byles's place. At least, Christmas came and went by, and January set in and passed over, and the green blades began

charitably to clothe the mound that marked the spot where he lay sleeping, before Shelbourne heard for certain that the school would open again on the first day of February, and that the successor was found.

Would he be young and unmarried? If so, he would want a charwoman. One or two village matrons who had been jealous of Martha Male's monopoly of Mr. Byles (or, as was really the case, his monopoly of her), looked out for an opportunity of begging Jonathan to speak a word for them to the new comer.

"*I speak for you?*" said he, smiling, "I don't know what I should have to do with the new master, or what he wants."

"Well, you know, we al'ays see'd you along o' Mr. Byles and Mr. Falk, and them," they argued.

"But I don't see," he would answer, "because I dug about Mr. Byles's roses that I'm to manage the new master's house for him, and settle who's to cook his dinner. Very like I shall never see the inside of that house again."

The women went away incredulous. Jonathan somehow always did get into favor. Whether it was the coat on his back, or the books he read, or the deal he knew about flowers, or whether it was "a way he had with him," they could not say; but the

fact remained—he made his way with folk, and kept his own way all the time.

Jonathan thought little, and cared less, who was coming to be master. He had been civil to Mr. Byles, and Mr. Byles to him; but he owed very little of his knowledge to him, and had not enough affection for his memory to be interested in his successor merely as such. He had no brothers and sisters to send to school, so that beyond a hope that the new school-master would teach the generation now growing up better than he had been taught, he did not give the question a thought.

Far less happy indeed were his musings. Between him and Andrew an estrangement had come, that he had at first thought to be only in his own fancy. There could be no doubt now. Andrew shunned him: and the friends that had always been together now seldom met.

Long days at the forge for Jonathan—long days at his own fireside for Andrew; for he was much longer in getting back his strength than even the doctor had expected. Christmas came without his attempting to go to work. In January, he tried again, but came home after an hour or two, quite knocked up. The doctor sent him tonics, and said that was all he needed. Martha Male believed that, and tried to force steel and quinine down his reluctant throat twice a day.

Perhaps, if the doctor had seen his patient at all hours, and in all places, he would have doubted a little the use of tonics. If he had seen Andrew bent over the fire through the long evenings with his head upon his hand, and all the strength and light gone out of his eyes ; if he had seen his expression change fitfully from sadness to sullenness and back again ; if he had watched him, when, in church or on the road, his eyes fell upon Jonathan Cleare, and noted the strange lights and shadows that crossed his face then, the fierce look that came for a moment and then burnt out suddenly into a worn, drawn look of anxiety and pain ; if he had seen all this, the doctor from Hephreth might have saved the carriage of all the bottles of tonic, and prescribed some other cure. Doctors see us as doctors, not as philosophers, and very seldom they can " minister to the mind diseased." And to his mother, who sat by him day after day, Andrew's true malady was not known. If there was one person in all Shelbourne who should have understood him, it was Jonathan : and he could not altogether understand. If there was another, it was Mrs Myse.

Often in her high bare room, awake partly from cold, and partly from ill-health, on her little bed in the corner, the patient little widow sent out her tender heart to Andrew Male, the poor lad who she could see was suffering so. She longed to tell him she un-

derstood his trouble, but could not. His quiet face and reserved manner kept her aloof; and was not his grief too sacred for handling? So she only showed her sympathy by "the touch of a hand that is warm," and by many prayers offered up in the stillness of long winter nights for this "dear sheep of the fold," as she would call him.

To her, and to her nephew Mr. May, the advent of Mr. Byles's successor was of some importance. And it was because they were so afraid of making a hasty choice, that the place remained long vacant.

At last it was settled.

"You will call and tell Mr. Falk, dear, of course," she said to Alfred, as he went out one morning, after receiving the final letter that sealed the fate of Shelbourne school.

Mr. May was, of course, going straight to Mr. Falk.

"Mr. Falk," said he, as Sarah showed him into the parlor, "it is finally settled, you will be glad to hear; and here is the letter. You may like to see it. Such a nice tone about it—don't you think so?"

"Won't you sit down, sir? Thank you;" and Mr. Falk leant his elbow on the mantelpiece, and read the letter.

"Very satisfactory, I should say," he said, handing it back. He felt no great interest in the school, but he liked being consulted, and, indeed, was used to it.

"So the school will open on the 1st," said Mr. May, slipping the letter down into his breast pocket, with his long white fingers. Mr. Falk noticed the alpaca coat was very shiny at the elbows.

They had had so many talks about the school and the vacancy, there was nothing more to be said about it. So Mr. May changed the conversation.

"That poor young Male does not seem to pick up much. I have been wondering whether he ought to go into Hepreth on an out-patients' day, and see Shannon. The little doctor—Pearce, I mean—seems to do nothing for him."

Mr. Falk expressed surprise, by some indescribable sound.

"I don't think he has got over his trouble, poor fellow: at least my aunt thinks so."

"People in his class of life don't usually take things so very much to heart," said Mr. Falk, turning his back to pick up the newspaper, which had fallen off the table, and then arranging the cloth carefully.

"Perhaps," said Mr. May, doubtfully; "but Andrew is above the average. It was a mysterious case, certainly. No light upon it whatever. It puzzles one sometimes to know why the Creator lets the innocent suffer, while the guilty flourish like green bay-trees. But, I believe, they 'have their reward.' The

penalty must be paid, either openly or in secret. Don't you think so ?”

“Look at the swans, sir,” said Mr. Falk, who had walked to the window and thrown it open.

Mr. May looked at the swans as he was desired

CHAPTER XXV.

THE NEW "MASTER."

SHELBOURNE woke up one day, with the wakening earth, to find that Mr. Byles's successor had come. It so happened that Alfred May took cold that morning that he paid his visit to Mr. Falk; and the hacking cough, that seldom left him, seized him with increased severity. So Mrs. Myse kept him in the house, and hardly dared to leave him for half an hour; and thus, in the bare ten days that elapsed before the school was to open, nothing transpired in the village about "him as was a-comin' in Mr. Byles's place." The people hoped light would be thrown on the subject, but Mr. Falk seldom or never gossiped, and there was nothing for it but to wait with patience for the new master (or his personal appearance) to speak for himself.

At last, one eventful Saturday—Monday next would be the 1st of February—it was noised abroad that towards evening a fly had appeared at the school-house door.

"And the wonderful sight o' boxes and bundles as was on the top," said Becky Flight, a gossip of the

first water. "Two big uns at the werry least, and as many small uns as I've fingers."

"Did you see 'em?" asked a neighbor.

"Yes, and there was women along o' him, I warrant. Ben Bower he were on the Hephreth road, and he says to Sam, says he, as he see'd women whatever."

"My comfort! so he's merried, and likely got a family!"

Hope dawned for an aspirant charwoman who was standing in the group with her arms a-kimbo. It was twilight, and they had gathered round the well to draw water for Sunday's use—yes, and for that night's use, too, for was not Saturday the great night for soap-chandlers in Shelbourne? People who never washed all the week washed then; but a dirty house, or a dirty face, was a rare thing in the village. The family *might* be large enough (the boxes being so many, and there being a fly and all)—the family *might* be large enough, to make the help of a friendly neighbor (at a shilling a day and rations) quite indispensable.

"There's a message come from the minister for the childer to go to the school, and come along of the missus to church, same's they used to go with Muster Byles," said the mother of a healthy family of eleven—who, as she had handsomely contributed to the population of the village, felt herself to have a right

to the earliest information about anything that concerned the rising generation.

"Wi' the missus? Then he's merried for sartin."

"Well, he might have a sister, mightn't he?" interposed a mild little woman, who was just carrying off her pail, but waited to hear if there was any amendment to her suggestion.

"The Lord on'y knows," said Martha Male, coming up suddenly, and plunging her pail decisively into the well. The action spoke cutting reproaches to the loiterers, who began each to turn to their pail and disperse, but not till Martha had delivered herself of her opinion. *She* never stood making words—that was what her action said. *She* knew no more than the rest of them—that was what her words said; and they implied, moreover, that if she, the respected and the respectable, the mother of Andrew, and the wife of Abraham, knew nothing, the lesser lights of Shelbourne might well be content to be in ignorance.

"We'll see him as he goes along of the children to-morrow," whispered the incorrigible Becky to her neighbor. And though the neighbor made no answer, she secretly determined to be on the lookout, ten minutes before church-time. She would arrange not to be making the beds just at that time to-morrow; for the bedroom window looked out at the back.

That Sunday morning seemed as if it had robbed

a day from April. The air was so soft, with the sense of winter and cold past, and the quickening warmth of a spring sun, that the oldest were cheated into a feeling of renewed youth.

Josiah Thorne lay happily on his bed, and watched the sweet day from the garret window. He could tell just how the fields would look on such a day: the tender green of the autumn-sown wheat, the rich brownness of the freshly-ploughed furrows, the damp hedges kindling into tiny red buds that held in themselves the full promise of the summer. It must be a cold heart that is not glad at the first stirring of life in the earth—that has no answering throb to the pulsing of the great heart of nature.

It was no hard thing, on such a day, for the women to wait about the open doors and windows, to see the new master taking the children to church. And they had not to wait long for the patter of feet and clatter of voices that announced them. The little things that could hardly be seen for the garden hedges, the naughty little boys with soaped cheeks, the taller girls who sang in the choir, they all came by. And, not walking with dignity afar off, as Mr. Byles used to walk, but with a child in each hand, and two or three hustling each other to get nearer, came a girl, with as sweet a face as ever looked out from a little grey bonnet, all soft and genial, like the pleasant day.

And after her—no master.

"That'll be his daughter," said Martha Male, a she brushed Andrew's coat, before he went to church. "She's a'most like a lady. And, my comfort! how she do let the children tumble about her! She won't keep her place with 'em, not like that."

The young girl who took the children to church, and marshalled them into their places, sat also among them. It was a trying place for her, for all Shelbourne looked at her with curiosity and surprise.

Little by little, as the service went on, it dawned upon some of them that, after all, there might be no master. Schoolmistresses had been heard of, certainly; but a slip of a girl like this! Well, they thought Mr. May might have known better—that was all.

"She to manage them masterful boys!" said Becky Flight. "She ain't no woman, not to speak of, what I call; let alone a schoolmissus."

But many liked looking at the "slip of a girl" for all that. They did not call her pretty; her face was too still and colorless, in church, whatever it might be outside, for the taste of village folks, who liked maidens to be "fine and stout." But they could not help watching her face, for all that, and the small hands that were busy finding the children's places.

Jonathan looked at her, like all the rest. It was a relief to him to see that placid pale face when he

turned his eyes from Andrew, sullen and dejected in the corner of the pew opposite him.

Rumor had said Mr. May was going to get a good singer and player. Jonathan watched to see whether the new mistress sang. But she did not. She only followed the hymns with her head bent.

"Were the master in church, Jonathan?" asked his little mother, when he got home.

"It isn't a master," said Jonathan, putting his hat on the table, and pushing his dark brown hair off his forehead. "It's a mistress."

"What! that young thing as went past, Jonathan?"

"Yes; I heard Mrs. Myse speak to her as I came out."

"How do she look, Jonathan?" persisted the quiet little deaf woman, gently. She had never had a daughter of her own, and she had a strange yearning over the pretty young thing she had seen go past her window.

"Well, she looks," began Jonathan, "she looks more like you than any one I've seen, mother."

"Oh, Jonathan, lad, she *would* be pleased if she heard you a-sayin' that!"

And the little woman sighed and smiled together, thinking of the days when she could have looked anything like the new schoolmistress.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MISS LYNN.

A PALE face in a grey bonnet, busy little hands finding the children's places—this was all that Shelbourne saw of Miss Lynn for two or three weeks.

But the children prattled about her all the day through, and the mothers began to take a liking to her from what the little ones said.

"Well, she do amuse 'em, and make the time pass," they said, "for all she looks so still and quiet. But as to the learnin', we don't know as how about that."

Mr. May, who was beginning to go about again now, was quite satisfied on the last point.

"She has a wonderful power with the children," he said to one of the mothers, the village virago, as he came into her house fresh from the school, one blustering March morning. "There is more order than there ever was before."

"Has she *indeed*, sir? you don't *say* so? Well, ye *must* be masterful with the children if ye're to do *anythink* with 'em. I has to flog Eliza Ann many and *many* a time. Julia there, she don't do nothin' without the stick, and she goin' sixteen. Sarah Jane,

I brought her up like with the cane. Billy, he don' do *nothink* without his father gives him a cuff on the head. Master Byles, he never teached 'em their letters to *my* thinkin' all along o' not using the stick reg'lar."

At every emphasized word it was Mrs. Bellar's habit to shake her head and her eyes fiercely. But the energy with which she gave forth each word was fierce. She was a fierce and terrible woman altogether, as Sarah Jane, Eliza Ann, and Billy could all testify. It was supposed that Mr. Bellar could also have testified to this fact. But either from motives of caution, or from real admiration of his stronger (if not better) half, he always defended his virago against all attacks.

Mr. May had once mildly remonstrated with him about his wife's constant quarrels and improper language.

"Tell you what it is, sir," said the little man, valiantly, "she's got a bit of a temper, sir, but she's a woman, sir, as *won't* be trampled on by *no* worm."

Mr. May tried now to explain to Mrs. Bellar that there were other influences than the stick and the fist which Miss Lynn used with effect. But it was a strange tongue in the ears of Mrs. Bellar. Sarah Jane, Eliza Ann, and Billy had defied the power of the cane, and what power could there be that they would not defy if these had failed?

"It seems strange they should both be women!" the curate thought to himself as he looked at the hard, bad countenance of the woman before him, always washing and never clean, always ordering and never obeyed, always asking and never satisfied, and thought of the girl—for he could call her no more—he had left in the school, keeping order without any trouble, hardly raising her voice when she spoke to the children—a hundred restless little children, who had learnt obedience and discipline in a few weeks' time.

"It is the most wonderful thing I ever saw, Alfred!" said Mrs. Myse. "I was quite frightened when I saw her the first Sunday. She looks such a child."

And in some ways Daphne Lynn at three-and-twenty was a child. To begin with, she had a face that never would grow old. At fifteen, she looked just • as she did now; at thirty she would be very little altered. Small regular features, sweet clear frank eyes, very little color to pass away with the first flush of youth, a small, slim figure—all these things were lasting, as things last in this world. It is a great thing when beauty is not like the sun on the mountain-tops, that passes off with the early morning, and is no more seen.

But the child-part of Daphne's nature did not show itself readily to the outside world. In church she

was the mistress, grave, quiet, with a decided little mouth, and demure ways. The children knew her better. They saw her smiles, and heard a merry laugh break from her sometimes over a mistake or failure. They heard her voice when she started the hymn before they began the day's work, and before it ended. They saw her slender throat throb like the thrush's, as she sang. They told their mothers "the new missus" was a "*very* good singer."

But naturally reserved and shy, it was at home that Daphne was most herself, and most lovable. Over her work, making her mother's tea, telling her some story of the day's doings, some funny saying of the children; it was then that the demure little face became radiant, like a child's face; that the lips parted and the soft eye sparkled, and the girl Daphne took the place of the schoolmistress, Miss Lynn.

"You'll come to church on Sunday, won't you, mother?" she said, one evening, as she set the blind woman's knitting straight, for Mrs. Lynn was blind. "You'll feel well enough by Sunday. There's a seat for you not far from me. Mr. Pedley came and asked if you would like it."

"I'll come, dear," said the old lady, a little querulously, "if the wind goes down a little. It hurts my eyes so."

When she began to talk about her eyes, Daphne

always ransacked her brain for something to distract her mother's thoughts.

"I must tell you how the people look in church, mother. It looks quite different from the church at Holme. It's so full, in the afternoons especially. And you'll like Mr. May's sermons. He speaks from his heart."

"I don't like a church that's crowded," said Mrs. Lynn, despondently; "it makes me nervous. Have you put the stitches on? which pin is it you've put towards me?"

"It's right now," said Daphne. "You've got to turn the heel. There; now you've got it!—Well, and I'm going to tell you about the people."

"I'd rather hear about the place," said her mother, "so as to find the way to church. What houses are there between us and the church?"

"Why, there's all the village!" said Daphne, "or nearly all. There is only a red place, that looks like an inn above us. Then below us there comes the school—don't twist your needle, mother, dear—and on this side of the road a row of cottages, and every one has a garden. And on the other side," she went on, rising and looking out under the blind, for she had forgotten what was on the other side, "there is a green field first, just opposite us; and next to that there's a house. Why, it must be a forge; the sparks

are flying so, up the chimney, and there is a great light on the road from it. Mr. May said he would ask the blacksmith to call and see the stove. I suppose he meant that blacksmith."

Next day, as Daphne Lynn was standing before the blackboard, with a piece of chalk between her fingers, a circle of open-mouthed children round her, a knock was heard at the school door.

"Open it, please, Billy. Isn't your name Billy?"

Billy, the son of the virago, opened the door obediently, without any cuff on the head. He seemed proud to do it—proud to be spoken to so civilly. He nearly twisted off his arm, in its ragged coat-sleeve, trying to get the handle turned quickly.

"Please, ma'am—it's Jonathan."

"Jonathan?" said Daphne, turning to one of the elder girls, inquiringly.

"It's Jonathan Cleare, the blacksmith. He's come ar'ter the stove, ma'am."

Daphne went to the door herself.

"Please come in, Mr. Cleare."

"I can come again, if I'm disturbing you, ma'am," he said, taking off his hat. "But Mr. May, he told me to call about the stove."

"You are not disturbing us. Will you look at it now? Silence, children. Slates out!"

Jonathan went down on his knee, to look at the stove.

"I could do it in a few minutes," he said, standing up, almost afraid to break the awful silence that the young girl who stood beside him had brought about by a word and a look. He had never seen anything like this in Mr. Byles's time.

"Well, they shall say grace, if you please," said Daphne; "and then they can go out of your way. It is just twelve o'clock."

"Grace!" said Daphne, without altering her voice.

All the eyes were squeezed up in a moment. Some of the faces puckered up with the eyes. All the little hands were folded tightly and reverently, while Miss Lynn said, in a clear voice, that had a subduing hush about its very tone—

"Father, we ask thee to sanctify these things to our use. Amen."

She pointed to the door, and the stream of children passed out, bursting, like freed larks, into a jubilee of voice and song, as soon as they had crossed the threshold.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AND THE HOME SHE LIVED IN.

MRS. LYNN kept a little servant-maid to look after her while Daphne was at school. She came in for the day, and went away at night. And the handmaiden Daphne had chosen was none other than Eliza Ann, the daughter of Mrs. Bellar.

There were pretty, neat, truthful-eyed girls in the school who would have done far better, and Daphne would have chosen one of those. But the children of the virago took her compassionate heart by storm. Billy's life should be happy, at least in school-hours; Eliza Ann might be reformed if she were well used, well trained, and well fed.

She had now an ill-used, untidy appearance: her colorless flaxen hair was always tangled and her dress awry. Her eyes were like her mother's—the fierceness stamped out, but the deceit left. She could not look Daphne in the face, if she pressed her hard for the truth—that is, if Daphne intimated that she knew her to be lying. But if she were quite certain her young mistress was not likely to be able to test the

accuracy of her statement, she would lie roundly. Not only this, but such an adept in lying was Eliza Ann, that she put on a look of the most extreme earnestness and truth at those times when she was farthest from it.

Eliza Ann had only been a few days in Mrs. Lynn's service when Jonathan came to mend the stove. Daphne had tamed her in outward appearance: the tangled hair was confined under a cap, and there was some attempt at a collar and an apron. Daphne was full of hope; this was but the beginning of changed days for Eliza Ann Bellar. Already the young schoolmistress was revolving in her mind the chance of procuring a really good place for the servant, who she foresaw would soon be above the low wages and humble place her mother could afford to give her. The first cloud came when Jonathan was still on his knees by the stove.

Miss Lynn was moving about lightly, opening the windows to let the fresh February air in, and looking through the wet copies left open on the desks.

A rap came at the half-open door.

"Please 'am, missus says as she wants to see you. She's awantin' Mr. Cleare in the house."

Wanting Mr. Cleare in the house? They had settled to keep to themselves as much as possible; would her mother want to ask the blacksmith in?

Daphne went over to see her mother.

"It's the tap in the cistern I want him for," said the blind woman, querulously. "That girl will drive me out of my mind, if I'm to be left alone with her every day. I heard the water running away all the morning; and, you know, in summer they say that well gets dry. She's done something to that tap, I'm certain."

"Go and fetch Mr. Cleare," said Daphne to Eliza Ann, who was standing stolid and sulky in the passage.

Jonathan came in, brushing his feet carefully on the door-mat.

The house was so changed he hardly knew it.

"I suppose you know this house well," said Miss Lynn, smiling. She was spreading a white cloth on the table, and putting two clean plates and glasses upon it. Her face was still flushed from the fatigue and exertion of teaching. She had a tired look about her forehead, but no ill-humor about her delicate mouth or in her gentle earnest eyes.

"Yes, ma'am, I knew it well in Mr. Byles's time. It's changed, though—very much changed since then."

"I did not like the paper," said Daphne, "so I have papered it myself."

Jonathan noticed a paper that he had not noticed

before, that gave just a soft atmosphere to the room, nothing more. Then he remembered a bright red-brown paper, with blue and scarlet spots, that had reigned in Mr. Byles's time.

He did not say anything. He only knew the room and the house were changed from meaningless gloom to freshness, and light, and warmth.

A table stood in the low window, a tall white glass was on it, a few books near it, a work-basket, and little thimble. As Daphne moved about, a branch of something green fell from the glass. She replaced it carefully. Jonathan noticed that the way she put it in made the vase look pretty at once; that every leaf had its meaning.

A little hyacinth stood in a pot on the window-sill, trying to break into bloom. Miss Lynn looked at it lovingly, and moved it into the sunshine. She said nothing, for she never spoke to strangers freely about the things she loved best; and flowers were very near to her heart. She was half ashamed of her childish love for them. She would not have told any one how she longed for the time of the daisies and primroses to come—how often they came before her, as she stood before the ugly blackboard in the bare school-room.

But Jonathan noticed that she had not one bloom, one touch of bright color in the green nosegay in

her tall glass. It could not be that she did not care for flowers, when she looked at the budding hyacinth like that. It could only be that she had no means of getting any.

If he had only been on such terms with Mr. Falk as to ask a favor of him, Jonathan knew of a little greenhouse that he had had a deal to do with, and there he could have got Miss Lynn a few flowers.

But he could not ask Mr. Falk a favor, so he said nothing, but turned to mend the cistern.

As he went out that morning, through the garden, he looked at the roses he used to attend to for Mr. Byles. They were well and healthy, putting out tender little green leaves at the top of their dry brown twigs. His care would not be thrown away. Miss Lynn would have flowers for her tall glass by-and-by; she would care for the roses.

"That's a nice young man," said Mrs. Lynn, feeling for the dinner that Daphne had cut up for her, with her fork, "I'm sure I'm thankful to him for stopping that leak. It's worried me so all the morning. Between that and the girl, I have no peace."

"Is she doing anything wrong, mother?" asked Daphne, looking distressed. "I *hoped* so she was getting on."

"She never speaks the truth except by mistake; she upsets everything she comes near if it's under a

ton weight; and when she walks about it shakes me nearly to pieces. That's all that's the matter with her."

"I'll speak to her, mother," said Daphne, "if you'll have a little patience, just at first."

Daphne was young still, and easily disheartened; but because she was young she was also very sanguine. She asked Eliza Ann in to have some dinner, and then showed her how to wash up the plates without a noise and clatter.

The two plates went through Eliza Ann's hands and the wash-tub without breaking; and Daphne took heart and went back to the school, feeling happier.

It was lucky for Miss Lynn's peace of mind that she did not see the look of surprise and disapprobation on Jonathan Cleare's face, at the sight of a daughter of the well-known house of Bellar, established as servant in the schoolmistress's home. What good could ever come of any dealing with that lot?

"You're late, Jonathan," said his mother, when he got home. "I thought maybe you weren't comin' to yer dinner."

"I had some odd jobs to do," said he, going to the window.

"Won't you come now and eat somethink, Jonathan?" pleaded the little woman—"There's nothink amiss with the flowers, is there? I've watered 'em reg'lar."

"No, there is nothing amiss," said Jonathan, coming to the table and sitting down. He had been looking for any sign of buds on his geraniums, but he was afraid it would be a long while before there was a bloom to cut.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TIME OF THE SINGING OF BIRDS.

THE turning of the year is very gradual. And yet in every spring there is one day that seems *the* herald of the new birth; one day, when the air is so soft, the singing of the birds so jubilant, the sky so cloudlessly blue, and the heart so light, there can be no doubt that the winter is over and gone. The yearly miracle has come round : the earth that was dead, like Lazarus is alive again, and every living thing is thrilling to the new stream of life that is flooding the world. And it is such an unfa^ding, untiring joy. Solomon's heart leapt to it nearly three thousand years ago ; and Daphne Lynn's heart leaps to it to-day.

The dream of winter has passed by for all in Shelbourne. To Mr. May, with his cough and constant ailments from being out in all weathers ; to Mrs. Myse, who has lain awake so many nights from cold, while the wind has moaned round the big deserted Place, and whistled mournfully through the unfurnished rooms and carpetless passages ; to 'Scilla in the Hepreth workhouse, watching the large flakes of snow that drifted past the window and settled in the

desolate court, and turning with a shiver to the infant in her arms ; to Andrew, to whom the winter had been the longest and saddest season he had ever known, how sweet and welcome was the warmth and the sense of spring !

It might be cold again, thought Mrs. Myse, stepping about in goloshes between the damp flower-beds, picking crocuses and pale garden primroses, but it could not be winter again for many months to come. And before that—why both Alfred and she might have gone home, she thought, as she looked across the park and the pond, and past Aaron Falk's house, to the churchyard lying in the sun at the foot of the grey steeple. Not that she was unhappy ; there was much to make life beautiful and pleasant, and it was hard to think of dying on a day like this.

“Children,” said Miss Lynn, after the morning lessons were over, “would you like to come out in the fields to have your dinner to-day, instead of playing in the school yard ? we could pick some primroses.”

There was a universal shout of assent. The decorum of school hours gave way to a joyful prattle and chatter.

All the baskets were dragged out of the shed, all the hats and cloaks tied on. Two little tinies were struggling with their garments, one trying to push his

arms into a little great-coat, the other to fasten in a loose string into her hat. Miss Lynn pushed on the great-coat and buttoned it.

“What do you say?”

“Thank you, mum.” And the rosy little man ran off shouting after his comrades, kicking up his heels in wild delight.

The other little one, sickly and white, was standing by the porch, still struggling with the hat. A faded red ribbon was in her hand, a large pin in her mouth. She lifted melancholy brown eyes to Miss Lynn’s face.

“Poor little woman!” said Daphne, looking compassionately at the thin little hands and pale cheeks. “Is your string loose? What a terrible pin! Is that all you have to fasten it with?”

“’Es, ma’am,” in a timid whisper.

“It must hurt your head. If you fell down it would run into you. Come into the house and we will put a stitch in.”

The little child held out its hand and followed obediently.

“There,” said Daphne, when the stitch had been put in; “now you can tie the hat as tight as you like, and roll in the grass all day without hurting yourself, and play with the others.”

The child looked up wonderingly. Roll in the

grass all day? Play with the others? She did not understand what such things meant. Her little life had been all sitting still in the chimney-corner, hungry and cold; or standing, colder still, outside the door till her mother had told her she might come in again. Not her own mother; you could see that in the child's face. The father had married again lately a rough, heartless, low woman, who used the child as a messenger, or as nurse to her healthy baby, and turned it out of doors at other times.

"Where's your dinner?" asked the schoolmistress, as she tied on her own bonnet, and opened the door to go out, having first seen that Mrs. Lynn had got hers, without any breaking of plates and upsetting of glasses by Eliza Ann.

The child put its wasted hand into its pocket, and drew out a dry crust of bread.

"Child!—you don't mean that's all your dinner?"

Daphne pushed her hand into the pocket herself, to make certain. As she turned it out, a few crumbs fell on the floor. The child stooped down, wet its finger and picked them up one by one, putting each into its mouth, and smacking its lips in pleased content.

"Oh! little one," said the schoolmistress, the tears coming into her eyes (and Daphne's tears did not often come), "you shall have some better dinner if you wait a minute."

She cut a piece of cold meat and some bread and cheese, and put in the child's hands. It looked up hesitatingly into her face.

"Yes, you may eat it now, as fast as you like, as we go along. We must run, though, or we shan't catch the other children."

But the child's legs were so weak, it could not run. They followed the merry voices of the children down the village. Some of the elder girls were waiting at a gate near the church.

"Please 'am, we wants to goo in here. The vi'lets is beautiful, all under the big trees."

"But may we go in? Whose field is it?" asked Miss Lynn.

"Please 'am, it's Mr. Falk's field, and he al'ays lets us goo in."

"I think you had better ask leave first," said Daphne, who had an impression that the brewer was a great autocrat, and much to be respected. "I will go to the door with you two elder girls, and ask if we may."

Sarah opened the door, and then ran to look for her master.

Mr. Falk appeared immediately.

"Won't you walk in?" he said politely.

"No, thank you, sir," said Miss Lynn. "We only wanted to know if there is any objection to the children going into your field to pick violets."

"Oh dear no! which field?" said the brewer, conveying delicately to Miss Lynn the fact that he was lord of many fields in Shelbourne.

The school-girls explained.

"Oh certainly," said Mr. Falk. He took his hat from a peg, and brushing a little malt from his coat-sleeve, followed the schoolmistress, and opened the gates.

They talked a little as they went towards the field, the two school-girls falling behind them.

"You are most welcome at any time to take them into any of my fields," he said, as he held open the last gate, leading into the meadow itself. "And I hope you will some day do me the pleasure of looking into my house. I don't know whether Mrs. Lynn is a lover of flowers. I have a nice garden, and a pretty show in my small greenhouse, if you care for such things."

"Oh, have you?" said Daphne eagerly, "I should like very much to see them. My mother is blind, but she would like to smell the flowers."

"Any day then, and any hour you may like to name," said Mr. Falk, "I shall be at your service—would to-morrow——"

"Saturday would suit me best," said Miss Lynn, "because that is a holiday."

"Then next Saturday—about two?" said Mr. Falk.

"Thank you—if my mother is well enough. I think it would do her good. I know she would enjoy it. We are very much obliged to you."

Mr. Falk took off his hat, and went back to his brewery. And Miss Lynn, sitting down on the driest grass she could find under a large elm tree, took a reel of thread from her pocket, and began tying up violets.

"Oh, but I don't mean them all to be brought to me," she said, as child after child rushed up with its hot hand full, and threw them in her lap.

They all stood still, their faces falling.

"Do you *like* best to give them to me, children?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am!" said a chorus of voices.

"Then I like them," said Daphne. She did not thank them, but they all understood the pleased look in her eyes.

"And won't you pick violets too?" she said, seeing the pale little child was standing at her side alone, the dinner finished, and the wistful look come back to its face.

It looked helplessly at her.

"Poor little thing! you don't know how to play or to pick flowers. Schoolmistress must teach you that by-and-by before you learn letters. But now you may come and sit on my dress—not on the grass, it

is a little damp. Look at these beautiful violets that God has made. Your name is a flower's name, isn't it? Aren't you called Lily?"

"Es 'am," in a less timid whisper.

"You like dinner better than violets, don't you, Lily?" said Daphne, peeping under her hat, and patting the pale cheeks. "But we need both, I think."

Jonathan Cleare passed by the field that morning, and looked as he passed by.

It was changed times for Shelbourne School, since 'Drew and he had smarted under the cane together. But he did not think Miss Lynn ought to be sitting on the damp grass so early in the year.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AARON FALK AT HOME.

SATURDAY came, and Mrs. Lynn was well enough to accept the brewer's invitation. When Daphne was at home, the burden of Eliza Ann and her misdemeanors did not press so heavily upon her, and the refreshing lull that Saturday brought with it to the neighborhood of the school and the school-mistress's house worked wonders for Daphne's mother.

"One can hear one's self speak once a-week," she said, as she let Daphne arrange her shawl and tie her bonnet.

"Oh, mother," said Daphne, reproachfully, "it is only from twelve to half-past one that the children make a noise. It does them such good after lessons."

"I dare say it does them good, my dear. I suppose it does that girl good to be my servant. But it isn't pleasant, and I can't say I think so."

Daphne bit her lip.

"If you wish it, Eliza Ann shall go home," she said. The reform of Eliza Ann was to be a day-dream then.

"If she did, you'd never be content till you had found another just like her," said Mrs. Lynn, pushing her chair back, and feeling for her daughter's arm.

It was nearly half-past two when they got to Mr. Falk's house, and they had had their frugal dinner long before they started. But, to Miss Lynn's surprise, an elaborate luncheon was prepared for them in one room, while the other was full of sunshine and books.

The windows of the last looked out, as we know, on to the pond and bridge, the lodge and approach to the Place, and the big elms that skirted the water. And close under the windows was Mr. Falk's garden, gay with bright spring flowers.

"How beautiful!" said Miss Lynn, as she stood, after lunch was over, in the window, leaving her mother to talk to Mr. Falk.

He rose and pushed an arm-chair towards her.

"It is pretty," he said. "Won't you sit down?"

"Oh, thank you," said Daphne. She thought Mr. Falk as pleasant as he was great. She felt it was rather a condescension on his part to be so civil to a poor schoolmistress.

She dreamed away ten minutes at the window, watching the swans dipping their long necks in the clear water, through which, even from the distance, she could see the bright green of the waving weeds. Then Mr. Falk came up to her and said—

"You are fond of flowers I think, Miss Lynn. I can show you some better than those you were tying up in the field. My little greenhouse is small, but it is in good order, and I have a nice show of bloom on just now."

"You will come too, mother?" said Daphne, seeing her mother sat still.

"I would rather rest here," she answered. "I cannot see the flowers, and I am a little tired. Mr. Falk will be so good as let me stay here I'm sure, while you go round the garden."

Daphne was disappointed.

"My mother is very fond of flowers," she said as she went out, feeling she ought to make some apology for Mrs. Lynn's apparent want of appreciation of the greenhouse and garden.

Mr. Falk had no objection to taking the trouble of showing the garden to Mrs. Lynn at any other time—that is, of taking her round it, if he might look forward to the pleasure of having their company again. So he intimated to Miss Lynn as he went round the corner, and opened the greenhouse door.

A breath of warm scented air met them on the threshold.

"*Oh!*" said Daphne, finding no better means of expressing her delight and astonishment.

Great pots of lily of the valley, of narcissus and

jonquils, of primulas and hyacinths, all blooming together, made the little place a paradise in her eyes.

"I never saw anything like this," she said earnestly, turning from sweet to sweet, and stooping over the lilies as if she could never breathe in enough of their delicate perfume. "How glad I am I came now—that you were so kind as to ask us now! In another week they would have been over."

"Something else would have replaced them," said Mr. Falk, smiling. "But as you like the early spring flowers so well, I am glad too that you came now."

"I *must* fetch my mother," said Miss Lynn; and before Mr. Falk could answer, she had sped round the garden to the house.

Mr. Falk smiled again, as he watched her. The little grave, pale, sedate schoolmistress could change into this, could she? Well, it was a beautiful change, and he liked it. And yet he had thought the little sedate Miss Lynn very pretty, as she sat on Sundays playing the harmonium—as she turned her head to speak to the children,—as she found their places with her small ungloved hands.

Miss Lynn went away with a bunch of Neapolitan violets in those hands. Both she and her mother were deeply grateful to Mr. Falk for his kindness. If they *could* sometimes come on Saturdays and see those flowers, and that lovely view from the windows,

and be civilly treated by a kind man like this, what a pleasure it might add to their life, thought Daphne! Her mother was like a changed being since she had been there.

She showed her gratitude as she lifted her earnest grey eyes to the brewer's face.

"You have given us such pleasure," she said, as she held out her hand. "We both thank you, sir, very much."

Aaron Falk looked pleased, till Daphne came to the word "sir." A shade of something that was not exactly annoyance passed over his face then. But it was only momentary; and as he held open the green swing-gate that let Mrs. Lynn and her daughter out on to the village green, he said—

"I need not say it has been a pleasure to me. I trust, Miss Lynn, it is a pleasure you and Mrs. Lynn will often afford me."

"We shall need very little temptation," said Daphne, smiling, "but till Easter I shall be very busy."

"He's a nice young man," said Mrs. Lynn, leaning on her daughter's arm as they crossed the green. She had said just the same of Jonathan.

"Young, mother! he's not at all young," said Daphne.

CHAPTER XXX.

INNOVATIONS.

EASTER fell late that year. April, with sun and showers, was well in, and the spring flowers out of doors were in their full beauty by Passion Week.

Daphne was preparing an anthem and the most joyful hymns for Easter Day. All the Shelbourne world was to be astonished. No one knew of it but Mr. May, whose permission had been readily given.

It was a secret between Daphne and the singers. An anthem had never been heard of in Shelbourne, where six hymn tunes had reigned without rival all through Mr. Byles's time. The old village fiddler, who played the harmonium in those days, had given up his place to Miss Lynn. He couldn't keep up with all the new-fangled tunes, he said.

"The Old Hundry went to a deal o' toons," he thought; "and as long as the toon goes along o' the hymn, what more could ye want? If the toons goes trillin' about where no one don't look for 'em to goo, half the folks has to stay behind. And then they haven't no sense to leave it alone, they haven't; but

after it they'll come, some time or another, for have their squeak they will. They've got their seats, and they've got their books; and they dun' know as why they shouldn't sing. Wonderful set up is folks: singin's a trade as well as tinkerin' or tailorin'; and what 'ud any one think if every one set to work a tinkerin' and a tailorin', because other folks did it? Howsomever, that's the way of folks with singin'; and so, says I, give 'em toons as they can run along side of; for ketchin' up a toon's a sorry thing, and don't make ye feel willin' to praise God, even of a Sunday, in yer best clothes."

But by degrees the congregation had begun to learn the "new-fangled" tunes; and Daphne thought that by Easter they would be quite ready for an anthem.

She had fresh innovations to suggest. Might she and the children put flowers in the church on Easter Day? She had looked at the beautiful proportions of the building, at the massive stone font, the quaint monuments, and the glorious glints of color from the old stained glass, till she longed to set it in moss and primroses, as she used to do at the church at Holme. Mr. May hesitated a little; he would think about it; he saw no harm; but he would speak to Mrs. Myse first. He also spoke to Mr. Falk; and both the little aunt and the autocratic brewer ap-

proved. So Daphne had her own way in this too.

Two or three days before Easter, she met Mr. May in the church, to settle what was to be done. Miss Lynn pointed out the only place in which she would need help.

"It would only want a little wire stretched across," she said, pointing to the sloping sill of the window that was to be banked with moss and flowers.

"Jonathan Cleare will do that for you," said the curate. "Perhaps you would tell him as you go home—you pass his mother's door, and the forge too—that he would oblige me by meeting you here on Saturday."

Miss Lynn found Mrs. Cleare's cottage, and knocked at the door. She was kept a few minutes waiting, for the deaf woman did not hear the first knock. But the time seemed short to Daphne, for she stood in the prettiest cottage garden she had ever seen. Tufts of violets and primroses and pink hepaticas were flowering in the border, enclosed by the neatest of privet hedges; and young leaves were coming out on the many creepers that were trained carefully about the windows and the porch. Mrs. Cleare must be a nice woman to be so fond of flowers.

"I came," said Miss Lynn, when her second and louder tap had brought Jonathan's mother to the

door, "to bring a message from Mr. May. I think it is your son, Mrs. Cleare, who is the blacksmith, isn't it?"

"I'm so dull o' hearin', my dear,—I beg your pardon, ma'am," she said, hastily correcting herself.

Miss Lynn repeated her words.

"Jonathan?" said Mrs. Cleare, her face lighting up. "Yes, he's my son. Is there anything as he can do for you, ma'am?"

She put her head on one side, to catch the answer.

Miss Lynn said Jonathan would oblige Mr. May by being at the church on Saturday morning.

Mrs. Cleare paused a moment, and then nodded her head a little dubiously.

"He'll be sure to come," she said, in her gentle, cheery voice. "Won't you look in a minute?"

"Is your husband ill?" asked Daphne, drawn towards the patient woman and the pale invalid sitting over the fire.

The elder Jonathan made some sound intended for a greeting, and pushed his hand nervously across his face. Daphne thought she had seldom seen a harder face. How difficult it must be to live with him!

"Has he been long ill?" she asked, turning to his wife.

"Five year as ever is," she answered. "He got a

mischief when he were liftin' a sack, and he never been right, not since then."

"Then you can't work?" said Daphne. "It must be a great trial, that."

A mumbled "yes," was the reply.

Miss Lynn felt she was not wanted, and turned to go. Mrs. Cleare followed her. Daphne's face was like a glint of sunlight to her—she could not lose it so soon.

"He don't say nothink," she said, in an undertone, as they stood in the garden, "but he's always sadly. I don't know right as how he feels, I don't. He don't say nothink; but I know he's bad by the looks of him; and the neighbors—they can hear him—and they says as he often moans by hisself in the garden. Very like he's a moanin' now to hisself by the fire, on'y I don't hear him. He's a very close man, and he don't like for me to take much notice on him, he don't." And she looked wistfully at Daphne, as much as to say, "You don't know what a trouble that can be."

Daphne only looked sorrowfully at her in return. There seemed no word for troubles like that. Presently she said—

"You are very fond of flowers, Mrs. Cleare. How pretty your garden is."

"I don't do nothink," she answered, smiling, and

shaking her head. "It's Jonathan, that's my son, as has done it. He's always wonderful arter flowers, he is. His flowers and his books, that's what he cares for. He were al'ays a good scholar, though he didn't get much larnin'. But he larn't to be a good son, he did, and that's the best lesson, I take it. He been always a good son to me, I know"—and her voice broke suddenly—"if it weren't for him 's father and I 'ud 'ave been long ago in Hepreth workhouse. Jonathan, he were away, and gettin' on first rate, he were. But his father took ill, and he come back as soon as ever he got the letter; and we're both beholden to him for all as ever we has—and it's all along o' him that we is so comfor'ble. He won't niver get on here same as he did there; but he's wonderful good to his mother and his father he is."

And Mrs. Cleare fairly broke down, and dried her fast-falling tears with her apron.

As Daphne Lynn held out her hand to her to say good-bye; she felt that, in spite of the hard, pale husband by the fire, she could not pity her.

"You'll come agin, if I'm not makin' too free asking of you?" said Jonathan's mother.

"I shall be very glad to come," said Daphne, as she went out.

"My dear, there's a letter for you," said Mrs. Lynn, as her daughter came in. "I couldn't make out what

the boy said, and of course Eliza Ann was out of the way. Up to some mischief, never fear."

Daphne opened a letter, addressed in a small, neat hand, which was lying on the table. It ran as follows:—

"The Brewery, Shelbourne.

"DEAR MISS LYNN,—I understand from Mrs. Myse that you think of decorating the church.

"I beg, therefore, to offer you any flowers, from my garden or greenhouse, which may be of use to you or take your fancy.

"With respects to Mrs. Lynn, believe me to remain,
yours faithfully,

AARON FALK."

"How kind!" said Miss Lynn. "I suppose Mr. May must have asked for them."

Mrs. Lynn's eyes, though they were blind, twinkled saucily behind her spectacles.

CHAPTER XXXI.

EASTER EVE.

EARLY on the Saturday morning, Eliza Ann's powers as parlor-maid, or porter, were tested. Perhaps she savored more of the latter, to judge by the clatter and tramp, anything but feminine, that heralded her approach through the little lobby, to open the door.

To it there had come Jonathan Cleare, the blacksmith.

As he passed the window he could not help seeing Miss Lynn moving about in the sunny parlor, preparing a neatly-laid breakfast on a little tray.

The sun was shining on the smooth brown hair, drawn from her face, and twisted round her head in a way that spoke both of care and of carelessness. Care, to be scrupulously neat and clean, carelessness as to what set the large twists of hair took, or how their arrangement might be most becoming. Not that Jonathan dissected the motives of the schoolmistress in this fashion. He only knew it was the face of the grey bonnet on Sundays, the face he had seen

flushed from teaching in the school, bonnetless now, and fresh as a new-blown rose in the early morning.

Daphne was circumspect. Her mother never came down to breakfast: and she would not, therefore, ask Jonathan Cleare to come in. Besides, she and her mother had decided, when they came to Shelbourne, that they would "keep to themselves."

She could not be quite sure that they had kept to their resolve, when she remembered the great luncheon at Mr. Falk's, and one or two visits to the cottagers when they were in trouble, and when she saw the young blacksmith waiting at the door for her orders about the church decoration. But after all, how much pleasanter life had become both to her and to her mother since they had innocently infringed the rigor of their rule.

She went out to speak to Jonathan, trusting the tray, with her mother's breakfast, to Eliza Ann.

"Good morning, ma'am," said Jonathan. "I came along to see what I could do for you. My mother understood you to say you wanted me here on Saturday—that's to-day?"

"Wanted you here? O no!" said Daphne. And then, seeing Jonathan color, she colored too, at her own awkward speech.

"I mean, I should not have thought of troubling you, only Mr. May said you could put some wire

across the window sills in the church; and it was he that wished me to ask you to look in there to-day."

"My mother's very dull of hearing," he answered—and Daphne could not help seeing that he showed ever so slightly that her first words had annoyed him—"and that's how the mistake's come. Perhaps Mr. May will let me know, then, when it is I am wanted."

"When it is convenient to you to come to the church, I think. Some of the girls and I are going to put the flowers in, and we can do the windows any time before dark that it suits you to come, Mr. Cleare."

Jonathan colored again, slightly. He was not used to be called Mr. Cleare. There had been a time when he looked something like the name, and when strangers' lips had called him by it. But now he looked at his fingers soiled with iron rust, and at the broad palm that had grown hard from work, and then at his coat, mended indeed by the little mother at home, but looking worn as a blacksmith's coat must look—and it seemed to him that the neat, delicate, well-dressed schoolmistress was mocking him, when she called him Mr. Cleare. Mr. Cleare! why, in her eyes what else could he be but a great clumsy workman? And his eyes fell upon a pair of small

white hands folded loosely before him, on a soft grey dress.

Jonathan knew Miss Lynn too little, or he was too proud to put his feelings into words. What could it matter what she thought of him, or what she called him? He was only the blacksmith, sent for to stretch wires in the church.

But Daphne was quick to read the human face, when that face was so honest as to wear no mask, and to change with every shade of feeling. She saw that she had in some way wounded Jonathan's feelings. She would try to make him amends.

"I could come down in five minutes just to show you what is required," she said humbly, afraid of making another mistake. "Perhaps you will walk in, till I have put on my bonnet?"

Jonathan was hesitating, and on the point of refusing, when a crash as of lightning, thunder, and teacups, silenced him.

Daphne gave a resigned sigh.

But following on the crash came a scream, which terrified her. It was her mother's voice. She fled upstairs as if she were on wings.

Little was to be seen of poor Mrs. Lynn, who lay, like Pompeii, buried in her own beauties. Daphne's little blue and white cups, given her by her father, the china teapot and cream-jug, every-

thing, was either a hopeless mass of bits upon the floor, or upset upon the bed. And upon the bed and all over the poor blind woman's hands and arms the teapot had emptied itself. Those hands, scalded and blistered, were the first things that Daphne saw. Mrs. Lynn was holding them up and wringing them helplessly over the débris of china and soaked bread and butter that surrounded her.

Daphne could not speak. She could not scold Eliza Ann, who stood there, sullen and stolid, saying and doing nothing. She felt she had only herself to blame: she that had been deceiving herself into thinking she was charitable, and who had been sacrificing her nearest and dearest all the time to her own whim.

She was too distressed, too angry with herself to cry. But as she tied up her mother's hands tenderly with cold cream and a soft handkerchief, Mrs. Lynn could feel that she was trembling.

"Oh, mother!" she said once remorsefully, under her breath; that was all.

It was like another being, the Miss Lynn who came quietly down stairs ten minutes later, followed by Eliza Ann in her hat and shawl. She was quite pale, and Jonathan could see she had been crying.

She did not seem to notice him, as she took hold of the sullen girl's hand, and led her gently to the door.

Jonathan saw her lay her hand on the threadbare shawl, and then he saw a thing that almost took his breath away.

He could not hear what Miss Lynn said, nor did he try to listen ; but he saw her draw the sullen stolid face towards her and kiss it.

And then the stolid look gave way, and the tears ran over the plain, hard face ; and the poor girl brushed the rough, red hand across her eyes, and tramped out to the gate, letting it bang behind her.

Daphne Lynn stood a moment looking after her. Then she came in, closed the door, and sank wearily into a seat in the parlor.

"I forgave her everything," she said at last, in a piteously sad tone—"everything that I could. She took my money and my clothes ; she broke almost everything I had ; and I thought if she only did not hurt my mother it would not matter. But I see now I have been deceiving myself, forgetting my duties at home, and trying to do charities abroad. I have no judgment. I am not fit to teach children. I ought to do plain sewing, to keep me quiet and in my right mind."

"I'm glad you've sent her away," said Jonathan, a little shyly. He was quite taken by surprise at being made the confidant of the woman that a few moments before he had thought was mocking him. This child-

like distress and the sudden expression of it was what he never had expected from Miss Lynn. But he had learnt to know that every time he saw her, a new side of her character was unveiled. The side shown him to-day moved his heart strangely. He could enter somewhat into the bitterness of disappointed hopes; he was, at least, so much nearer her than he had been an hour ago, that he could pity her.

She saw his sympathy in his kind, honest face, though he did not attempt speech.

"You have had trouble, too," she said. "I know you have had disappointments. I have heard how you might have been——" Something stopped her. She felt she was too much of a stranger to touch upon this man's silent struggles and victories uninvited.

And Jonathan did not help her. He would have given a good deal for words just then, but they came to him so slowly.

Miss Lynn rose, and tied on her bonnet.

"I am sorry to have kept you so long," she said. "We can go to the church now. And on the way, is there any one you could tell me of who would wait on my mother, now Eliza Ann is gone?"

"My mother could come in for to-day," said Jonathan; "and afterwards there's Martha Male 'ud do for you. Or, if it was only for an hour or two,

there's Jael Thorne; she can't leave the old gentleman long together, but she'd be glad to earn a shilling any way she could."

Jonathan went in to speak to his mother, while Miss Lynn walked on to the church. When she got there, she found the school-girls had not arrived; but Mr. Falk was in the porch, and a great basket of cut flowers was swinging on Ben Bowers' arm.

Daphne did not try to conceal her delight and gratitude for his generosity. But Aaron Falk's services were not to end there.

When Jonathan reached the church, with a wire and hammer in his hand, Aaron Falk was standing on steps, arranging the moss on the window-sills for Miss Lynn. Two school-girls beside her were tying primroses into bunches. Mrs. Myse was creeping about, all smiles, and contentment, and admiration.

"We needn't keep you, thank you, Jonathan," said Mr. Falk, from his eminence on the steps; "I can do all that is required here."

CHAPTER XXXII.

ANDREW.

WITH warmer days, and perhaps because a long time had now passed since his leg was broken, Andrew Male took to regular work again.

This in itself helped him to regain strength, and the second and the third week he felt much less tired than the first: and so the old routine of the laborer's life began for him anew.

But he was an altered man for all that, and all his mates knew it. He had always been steady and hardworking, not given to "larks," as they called it; but his had always been the merriest laugh when a joke went round, and the clearest whistle that came from the plough as it turned up the deep furrows was the tuneful whistle of Andrew: and though he was not tall like Jonathan, he could show a chest and a pair of stout arms against any man.

Now, he seldom seemed to hear a joke, or if he did, he smiled grimly and said nothing. He followed the plough first, and later the drill and the harrow, in silence, dragging himself along in a half-weary, half-lazy way that was new to him. He stooped too,

which made the broad chest look narrower : and the men he worked with could make nothing of him. The little boys who guided the plough while he led the horse, often had a sharp word thrown to them, and his temper seemed to vary continually : from sullen hard work to moody idleness, no one knew which way, as they expressed it, the "fit would take him." Some evenings he worked on an hour after the other men had gone home ; on other days he asked the time, or watched the sun going down in the sky continually ; and at the first stroke of the hour that ended the laborer's day, he would fetch his coat and wallet, and tramp off hurriedly towards home.

"Not as he got nothin' to do when he gits here," said his mother—"but gurn over the fire, or stand in the doorway wi' his hands in his pockets."

It was a time when any man with a tendency—from whatever cause—to drink, would have become a constant visitor to the Red Inn. Happily Andrew had no leaning that way, inherited from father or from mother, and his own tastes would never lead him to it. He could take a pint of beer at the inn like other men, but he knew when to stop better than they did. And it never occurred to him that the company at the Red Inn, or the beer to be found there, would minister to his trouble : rather he

shrank from the company, and took his pint at home.

As the days grew longer, and the evenings less cold, the fireside was more and more left for the doorway. There, in the gloaming, he stood sometimes for hours, watching the darkness stealing over the village, and feeling the hush that evening in country places brings with it. He found some strange comfort in it: the twilight and the stillness were more in keeping with his frame of mind than the happier light and sound of day.

At those times his very trouble grew dim and indistinct. A sense of injury, of grievous wrong done to him, clung about him still. But the ignorance and uncertainty he was in, could leave little room for such active feelings as hatred or the desire for revenge. Hate whom? He knew not. Only, therefore, to the world about him his dull, sullen hate went out.

On such nights, Jonathan going from the forge to his cottage often passed him by. Sometimes he saw Andrew in the doorway, and then he would always come towards the garden gate and ask him how he did. The time was over for Andrew's questionings. Jonathan felt that, and had nothing to fear in facing his mate; and Andrew could not help seeing that Jonathan feared nothing: that he looked him full in

the face when they met; that he did all in his power to drive away the cloud that hung between them.

And yet the cloud hung there: and Andrew could not dispel it. He sometimes longed for one word from Jonathan that he could lay hold of, one awkward look, one sign that now as before, his mate avoided him. Then he would have it out, for better or for worse. Then he should know for certain, either that what he dreaded was true, or that his friend was true.

But accuse Jonathan of so foul a deed, when he looked at him like *that*—when he came out of his way to speak cheerily to him; when his face wore the innocence of a two years' old child, coupled with the strength of purpose of a full-grown man—how was it possible?

Andrew felt it was not possible, and yet—his mother's words came back to him, a thousand mocking echoes seemed to lend their horrid help to his suspicion, and he must keep silence.

In the bitterness of his soul he cried out often, not in words, but in the silent utterances of that soul—“How long, O Lord, how long?”

For little 'Scilla, his poor 'Scilla of past days—he knew she was happy. Jael had told him that she had been to see her once, and that she was quite contented having the child with her. Thre

winter, when coals were dear, and the wind bitter, he often comforted himself thinking that she would fare better even in the workhouse than in old Josiah's home, where food and firing were ever scanty. And though perhaps he hardly knew it, his feeling towards 'Scilla was not quite, could not be quite, what it had been. Something stood between her and him, like the something that stood between him and Jonathan. But in the one case it was the dread suspicion: in the other it was the thought of that child—the child that 'Scilla loved. She had never loved *him*, surely: and yet she had love somewhere, it seemed, after all. Not that he wished anything away from her that brought her contentment. It was from the very depth of his love that he was able to find comfort in the knowledge that she, at least, did not suffer.

But now as the spring came on, and the sounds of piping thrushes and chattering starlings, and the sight of primroses opening in the copses, and ferns unrolling their tender green heads in the hedge-rows—as all these things came back to earth and to him, there came also, keen and fresh, the remembrance of last year's spring, and of 'Scilla's happy child-like delight and wonder at what seemed now to Andrew to be returning to a blind and thankless world.

The new life abroad and stirring seemed to have

come into his being : but only to change the dull numb pain of winter for the pain of returning consciousness. He had thought little of primroses and singing birds before : now he knew by the trouble they brought him that they were bound up with the happiest moments of his life.

It is sad when nature says to a heart young enough to suffer keenly, but too young to know how little meaning there is in those words—have been, are, and shall be—that its happy moments are all past.

One soft still evening in May, when the weight of the newly-awakened pain was pressing at its heaviest on Andrew's spirit, Jonathan came across from the forge.

"You'll walk with me a bit, won't you, 'Drew?" he said, with his hand upon the gate; "it's such a wonderful fine ev'ning."

Any change must be a relief. Andrew followed his friend on to the road, and across the village green, with his hands in his pockets.

He had a strange hope that something might come of that walk, some light upon the darkness.

If any man had called him at that moment, he would have come as he did at Jonathan's bidding, if only to get away from himself and his miserable thoughts.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN EVENING WALK, WITH CLOUDS.

THEY walked on in silence for some little time. There could not but be a certain embarrassment, now that the two friends so long estranged found themselves each alone in the company of the other.

Jonathan, perhaps, was most conscious of this, because with him there was no other consciousness to overpower it. Andrew knew more than that they had been long estranged; he felt that there had been a cruel cause for it. Why he was in Jonathan's presence now, he could not tell. The same mist of uncertainty and suspense he had so long lived in, enfolded him still. And yet he felt as if some mysterious decree of fate led him on to-night.

It is at these times of absolute powerlessness that we best realise that power that we call (too often irreverently) Providence. We are not leading ourselves; some one else has taken us by the hand.

"Where are you goin'?" he asked indifferently, as Jonathan having crossed the green, directed his steps towards the churchyard.

"Only going to look in," was the answer. "It looks like summer, having the wire doors shut, and the others left open."

"It needs air, the church does," said Andrew. "It's wonderful damp o' Sundays."

"Yes, if the Squire never did us another good turn, he did us that one. They must have cost a deal of money, those gates."

They found the churchyard gate locked. But Jonathan threw his long legs over the railings without difficulty, and 'Drew, with less ease, followed him. There was a high mild wind blowing; the moon was nearly at the full, and set in a deep grey sky. Drifts of white cloud hurried over her face continually, and when they passed beneath her, she shed a dull red light upon their outer edge. Here and there out of bays of deep grey, a bright star twinkled. The elms in the churchyard were waving lazily in the night wind.

Jonathan pressed his face against the wires, and looked into the church. A flood of silver light was pouring in. It fell upon the moss on the window-sills, and upon the shapes of delicate feathery fronds of ferns leaning against the glass; and out of the moss there looked white blossoms, vividly white as they caught the moonlight in the dark building. The knight, with his visor down, was sleeping

the shadows, and the little harmonium sat in darkness, just the white edges of the hymn-books upon it showing through the gloom.

"The church was never noticed like that before," said Andrew. "The schoolmissus is very handy, I take it; she done it all, so folks say."

"She did all the tasty part," said Jonathan; "I helped her to stick on some of the moss, and such rough work as that."

"I thought Mr. Falk done that," Andrew said, indifferently, turning away; "all the folk were chattering about him and her making a match of it, and that. I didn't take any count of it, but I thought it like enough. It 'ud be a good match for the schoolmissus."

Jonathan kicked a large stone, half buried in the grass, and sent it spinning to the gate. Then he said—

"Folks said right, and I said right too. Mr. Falk put up the moss at Easter; and I put it up at Whitsun; and that's the rights of it, if any one wants to know."

"You needn't take offence," said 'Drew wearily. What could it matter to him, who put the moss in the church? He had other thoughts to trouble him.

"I'd like to go round the shrubbery at the

Place," he said, as they left the churchyard; "it's so light, every one can see who it is, and we can't do no harm going."

They walked up the approach, and struck off to the right of the big white house, past the place where the bed of daffodils grew earlier in the year, and into the deserted, neglected grounds.

"I've not been here ever so long, have you?" said Jonathan.

Andrew threw up his head, and said, "I've not been here since—not since April twelvemonth. She brought me here to help her carry the Lenten lilies as Mr. Myse let her pick."

"Do you mean 'Scilla?'" asked Jonathan.

"Who else?" he answered, as if there were but one woman in all the world.

Andrew was longing to pour out his heart, as in the old days, to his friend. He looked quickly into Jonathan's face when he said, "Do you mean 'Scilla?'" Jonathan was looking at him just as in times past; there was not a trace of consciousness written there—not even the embarrassment that their long silence upon that subject might have made quite natural. In his friend's presence, the horrid fears, the hateful suspicion that had haunted Andrew of late, melted away. He forgot for a time that he had ever felt them.

"I daresay you think as I've forgotten about her. It's like enough. It seems so easy sometimes to forget. But the thought of her's with me day and night. I can't away with it."

"I did think, maybe, you were getting by it," said Jonathan, not knowing what else to say.

"It's not like as I ever shall, not till I know the rights or the wrongs of it for certain. To know as there's some one a-goin' about who's the blackest enemy ever a man had; and to know he's goin' scot free, and 'Scilla shut up between them work'us walls, all along o' him—it's a hard thing to bear, I tell'e, Jonathan; and many's the time I think I won't bear it long. I don't see as I can, not much longer."

"Do you think it 'ud make it easier to bear if you knew?" said Jonathan, half frightened by Andrew's sullen, determined words, the full meaning of which he could not understand. If Andrew's life were to be consumed by the fire of this hopeless searching for the truth, by this sullen hate that seemed to have turned in upon himself for want of the outlet of a natural indignation, Jonathan was not the one to sacrifice his friend, even for Jael and Josiah Thorne's comfort, still less for Aaron Falk's good name. Jael and Josiah would be provided for; the God of justice would see after them.

And as for Aaron Falk—what was he doing to make Jonathan keep his black secret longer? What was he doing to deserve Jonathan's forbearance and silence so long? He would keep to his agreement; he would warn Aaron Falk first, and then tell Andrew.

To Andrew's keen ears, intent on finding out the truth somewhere, and alive to every shade of expression or of tone, Jonathan had already betrayed himself. The way in which he had asked, "Do you think it would be easier to bear, if *you knew*?" carried to Andrew's heart the conviction that Jonathan was not in the same darkness as himself.

He stood still and faced him in the narrow shrubbery walk.

"Jonathan, can you say before God that you don't know who it is that I want to find—who it is that's ruined her life and mine?"

Jonathan looked down. Andrew could hear his own heart beating above the rustling of the disturbed birds in the bushes, above "the dry-tongued laurel's pattering talk" on either side.

"I can't say so before God, nor yet before you, 'Drew. I wish to God I could."

Andrew's hand that he had laid upon his friend's shoulder relaxed its grasp. They stood looking at one another, the clouds and the moonlight chasing

each other, in light and shadow, over their troubled faces.

"Jonathan," said Andrew, at last, "I never thought that you'd be able to raise the devil in me. But you've done it, and you've to answer for it. If you're an honest man, why can't you give me an honest answer? But you'll give me an answer this time, or, though you're a bigger man than I am, and not broken with trouble, you'll not go out of this wood to-night. This is the question I've got to put to you—and if there's anythin' of the man left in you, you'll answer it;" he stretched his face forward, and looked full into his friend's eyes, as he said, in a loud, strange whisper, "*Are you the man I want to find, Jonathan Cleare?*"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FAIRER WEATHER.

IT is not always that nature attunes herself to man. She does not often weep when we weep, and smile when we smile. But sometimes, to our fancy, she becomes an omen of good or evil.

It was so on this fresh May evening, that saw Jonathan and Andrew face to face on the weed-grown shrubbery walk.

As Andrew, wrought by long trouble and suspense, wrung from himself the question that had lain so long upon his heart, the last woolly rift of cloud passed over the pale moon, and a flood of soft white light, such as they had seen through the church-windows, fell upon the path, the laurels, and upon Jonathan's face.

He hardly needed to answer; the answer was written there. Indeed, at first he could find no words. Pity for his friend, and contempt for his base suspicion, strove together for the mastery. His eyes, full of a half angry, half sorrowful reproach, looked full into the eyes of Andrew.

It was Andrew's turn to look down now. C

the soft sighing of the wind in the tree-tops, and the melancholy hoot of an owl on the chimney of the Place broke the silence. Jonathan was the first to speak.

"'Drew," he said, "I knew you were changed—not as you used to be. I knew you didn't care to come along with me, not as in the old times. But I thought all along that it was because I wouldn't help you find out what you wanted."

He paused. Andrew was looking down still, and made no answer.

"But I see now," continued Jonathan, "that there's been another reason, I was going to say a better reason, but I'd best leave the 'better' unsaid. And I've got a question to put to you, and the question's this—If you thought of me, as it's plain enough you've been thinking—if you thought me the villain you did think me, how was it that you ever came nigh me again at all? How is it that you came out again with me this night, making believe to be friends with Judas, under the Almighty's sky? If you couldn't come to me like an honest man and ask me, long ago, why didn't you keep clear of me altogether?"

There was still silence. Plain-spoken simple Andrew could find no answer. He could not analyze his thoughts and say that sometimes he had

doubted his friend, and as often believed in him and hated himself: that sometimes his doubt had the mastery, and sometimes his faith. He felt ashamed, and yet he thought his mate was a little hard on him. He tried to think over the past months, to remember how it was that he had first suspected Jonathan, and how it was that he had feared to face the man he suspected and to know the truth. But the past months were all trouble, hesitation, gloom, uncertainty; he could unravel no thread from the tangled skein, he could not justify himself to his friend.

Jonathan began to turn homewards. Andrew followed him a few yards behind, still with his head down, trying to think.

At last he said—

“I think it was just because you were my mate I didn’t like to face it out wi’ you. I was afraid it might be right, Jonathan, that you were the man. But some days I didn’t think it, because I couldn’t—and I couldn’t come to you, not then—how should I? I think you’re a bit hard on me, Jonathan, though I know as I’ve said a nasty thing to you to-night.”

Jonathan had slackened his pace, and was walking beside him. They had got on to the approach again.

"Maybe, 'Drew, we've both been hard on each other. But I think it was you begun it to-night. If I'd thought you suspected—"

"Don't say it no more," said 'Drew, interrupting him; "I don't want to hear of it no more. But there's this left that I'd like to set my mind at rest on, You told me you knew the man, and you'll tell me, I take it. I suppose you thought I'd take his life of him if you told me; but now as I know it wasn't—it isn't—as I thought—I think I could keep my hands off of him, if I'd once got my mind set at rest. It's so long sin', and it can't be undone."

He looked earnestly at his friend for an answer.

Jonathan thought a moment, and said—

"I'm bound by a promise, 'Drew, and I've been bound all along; but if I'd thought you thought so ill of me, I'd have been tempted—"

"Don't say no more o' that," said Andrew, eagerly.

"No, I'll say no more. But as I'm bound, rightly or wrongly, I can't speak, though I sometimes wish I could. I've seen things o' late that have made me long to speak, not for your sake only, nor for mine; but then I've thought again, perhaps it is myself at the bottom after all; it's so easy deceivin' one's self when you've got any concern in a business; and I'll have to hold my tongue, since I've

given my word. And I know if I spoke it 'ud be the ruin of more than one, and it couldn't do you any good."

Andrew was hanging upon his words. They had come to the lodge-gate, and the church-clock struck ten. Jonathan opened the gate.

"More than one?" repeated Andrew.

"I mean," said Jonathan, "that—" he hesitated, not knowing how to satisfy Andrew without betraying his secret—"that, if I speak, it'll ruin some you're concerned with, least some you care for; and it's for them mostly that we've—I've—kept silence, all along."

Jonathan had corrected his slip quickly, but not quickly enough for Andrew. "*We've* kept silence," he said to himself, and he thought perhaps this might be a key to other things, if he kept and pondered it a little. Some one else, then, knew besides Jonathan.

They went across the green, and both knew they were happier than when they had started for the walk in the shrubbery. Happier in so far that they were mates again, with faith in each other, and the thick cloud riven. It lifted a great weight off both their honest hearts that henceforward there need be no silence and no estrangement.

"If I were rich like that man there," said An-

drew, pointing to Aaron Falk's house, "I suppose I could find out all as I wanted, and get justice done. But they don't git in trouble like other folk," he added, unconscious that he was quoting the words the Hebrew Psalmist applied to the wicked in power.

Jonathan knew it, and could hardly suppress a bitter smile. 'Drew need not envy Aaron Falk, would have been his feeling two or three months ago. Now, he was not so sure of that. Position and money, a fair tongue and a greenhouse of flowers could do great things in this world.

As they parted, Andrew said—

"It's all clear between us now, Jonathan. But I may as well tell you, since we're all straightfor'ard together again, that though I'll not get you to break your promise, I'll leave no stone unturned to find out what you know. Good-night, lad."

Jonathan went up to the forge, to take a last look at the fire, when he had left Andrew.

The lights were still burning in the school-house parlor. Behind the blind Jonathan could see a plant in a pot upon the little table. He knew where that must have come from.

And with a leap of hope, Andrew's last words came back to him.

Suppose it *were* found out at last, and without his

breaking his promise? Suppose the green bay-tree ceased suddenly to flourish after all.

He tried to fling the thought from him. What business had he to have such thoughts, and what could he have to do with the rich brewer's rise or fall?

He shut the ill-fitting door with a pull and a bang, and put the large rusty key in his pocket.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE GREEN BAY-TREE.

ARON FALK was abroad too that night. A spirit of unrest had come upon him. He was leaning against his open door, watching the clouds and the moonlight, when Jonathan and Andrew passed by his gate, coming from the churchyard, and making their way towards the shrubbery at the Place.

He wondered, as idle men wonder, why they had gone to the churchyard at all ; and thinking of that, an idea seemed to strike him, for he took his hat from a peg and went out, up the little garden-path and the damp stone steps, his private way to the church. A low gate at the top of the steps opened straight into the churchyard. All the graves except one were green : that one had been there long enough to be green too, but the winter had been against the growing of grass, and still only a few charitable blades had come up over Mr. Byles's resting-place.

Strange to say, the grave came in and played its part in the train of thought with which he had started from his own door. He stood for a moment looking

at it, thinking of the man who lay there, and his cheerless, loveless life ; of the school-house as it used to be ; and of the school-house as it was now. He had been to tea at the school-house that afternoon, so the memory of it was fresh in his mind. And it was not the first time that Mrs. Lynn had asked him.

He passed the grave, and went on to the porch of the church. The fresh, soft wind was blowing in through the wire doors. The church was almost dark, the moon hidden for a while by white clouds : but he too looked to the window-sills, bedded in moss, and thought he saw white flowers in it. They were his flowers, he said to himself with quiet satisfaction. He had put such flowers in, with Miss Lynn, at Easter. Why had she not asked him at Whitsuntide ? Not that he could have done it again ; he had been to Hepreth on business instead. But still—why had she not asked him ?

“ Been to Hepreth,” said a thought like a voice. Aaron Falk tried to stifle it. He did not care to remember that he had been to Hepreth. For as he had passed the workhouse, the door of the women’s court had opened into the road, and two women had come out. One was greyhaired and a stranger : the other was neither old nor a stranger. She was a beautiful girl, with a simple innocent childish face, and she carried an infant in her arms.

She looked at Aaron Falk, and he knew she did so. But she made no sign of recognition, though to Ben Bower she probably did, for he said, "How are you, 'Scilla?"

Aaron Falk drove on, and he had soon passed the women. But somehow the face of one followed him; into Hepreth, into the bank, into the market: and as he drove home it followed him still.

And yet he had delayed and delayed his start till Ben's patience, which was not easily tried, began to give way. The brewer said to himself that he was waiting because he met old friends, because his business required it, because the wind would go down later. But his truer self knew he was waiting till the hour came when the women of the workhouse must be in again, when he should be safe not to see the face again.

And to-night, more than twenty-four hours after, the face is following him still, though between it and him the face of Daphne Lynn had stood only an hour or two before.

It seemed to him that the one woman's face con-jured up the other. As he thought of Miss Lynn, the recollection of 'Scilla hurried to him. As he thought of 'Scilla, with a pang of keen remorse—for Aaron Falk was not quite heartless—the face of Daphne swept in upon him.

The first face was beautiful and childish ; the second was to Aaron Falk the face of an angel.

But an angel of no peace.

That might have been, if the other face had not come between them. Now to think of Daphne was only less pain than to think of Priscilla Thorne. For the shadow of the last pursued him : he knew that often he could not look into Miss Lynn's face because of it.

He turned from the porch, and the mark of men's footsteps on the path, and a furrow made by a stone that had been kicked along it, diverted his thoughts for a time.

Jonathan and Andrew Male. Why had they been walking together, and at night ? Were they fast friends again ? People had said there had been a coolness between them, and Aaron Falk had heard it well pleased. It was as well, considering Jonathan's promise, that he and Andrew Male should not be much together. Confidences sometimes oozed out when friends got together, however good and honorable their intentions might be.

And then—Jonathan Cleare had helped Miss Lynn in the church last Saturday. He, no doubt, had stretched the wire, and divided the sheets of moss, and done the little services that at Easter he himself had done for her. And of course the blacksmith was the right person to do those things. Aaron Falk had

no objection whatever to his doing it, if only—but it was a cogent “if”—if only nothing to Aaron Falk’s discredit, no covert hint, no unintentional slip as to his character, had dropped from the blacksmith’s lips.

But it was comforting to know that only Jonathan had helped the schoolmistress. Aaron Falk would have disliked it more, he said to himself, if some rival had taken his place. Ainger, the good-looking solicitor’s son, at Hepreth, or some one equally dangerous.

And very soon he acknowledged to himself, that if the blacksmith were all he had to fear, he should do well. Jonathan had no object in speaking, and every reason for keeping silence. It was himself, and no other, that the brewer had to fear.

For it was his own consciousness, the remembrance of his own deeds, that made the haunting face so terrible to him, that made him fear too, and almost tremble, in the presence of Daphne Lynn.

He walked up and down the churchyard path, watching his own shadow and his own footsteps, but unconscious of both.

He was going over the past with keen remorse and bitter humiliation. How inexorable it was, that word “past.” No undoing possible, no living over again, no washing out the stain.

It seemed hard. So few knew it ; no more need

ever know it. It did not seem likely they would, now that so many months had gone by safely.

But it was there, all the same. Others might think the same of him as before. Money might flow in, and trade increase. And—a sweeter hope than any of these came before him—even that was possible, very possible.

But the past could never be undone ; that must live forever with him and die with him. The knowledge of it had made life tasteless to him for many long months already. And in his happiest moments, yes, in his better moments—for of these, too, he was conscious—the inexorable past would still stride in, and make his sweet bitter.

He had not suffered like this all the time, nor every day. He had looked at sin with other men's eyes, with the world's eyes, and pronounced it nothing—a mistake, a pity, an error.

He had put it from him by business, by sleep, by a hundred other means ; and, till of late, he thought he had outlived it.

And what had come of late to him ? Just this. The face of a pure woman had come into his life, and he knew to-day he loved her.

He had often wondered what real love could be. He knew now.

But it seemed hard that, with the sweetness of it, the dead past should start into life and torment him.

He walked till he grew cold and tired, and then he turned back to the little gate and the stone steps.

He started, as something white brushed past him with a gust of air. It was only the white owl from the bell-tower, going out on her nightly rounds.

He went into his silent house, lighted only by the moonlight. Groping for a match, he lit a candle, and went up to bed.

But he lay long awake, and said to himself that it was the moonlight that prevented sleep coming to him. And this was the man that Andrew, as he passed his gate that night, had envied ; to whom Jonathan had grudged his prosperity.

God's ways are more equal than we think them.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THROUGH FIELDS IN MAY.

MISS LYNN'S domestic difficulties did not end with the dismissal of Eliza Ann. Mrs. Lynn, grown wise and valiant by experience, would not hear of having another raw school-girl, and Daphne's means did not allow of a better class of servant: so they had to manage as best they could, with the occasional help of a charwoman.

Martha Male came in several times, but she was too loquacious and too strong for querulous, nervous Mrs. Lynn; and, moreover, there was something like condescension in her tone and manner, not offensive by any means, but that told Daphne there was no occasion for *her* to go out, the wife of Abraham, and the mother of Andrew, for all that she had taken pity upon the forlorn schoolmaster in bygone days.

Jonathan had mentioned some one of the name of Jael. Daphne found out where Jael lived, and one warm May afternoon, a Saturday, while the elder girls were cleaning out the school, she put on her bonnet and set out across the fields to the Thorne's cottage.

Half-way up the village, she turned in at the gate of a field. It was pasture land, and the soft green turf was pleasant to her feet. Still more pleasant to her tired eyes was the tender yellow of the cowslips that carpeted the earth. She picked and picked as she went along, till her hands were full, each time thinking she had enough, and that this flower should be the last, and child-like each time seeing a blossom too beautiful to be passed over. The field rose gently to a height where a circle of elms crowned it. They were dusted with their first light green, and the building rooks were cawing in the branches. Round their stems a month ago, the violets white and purple had covered the ground. Now, fleecy ewes were lying there with merry two-months lambs beside them, and a saucy jackdaw made his rounds from fleece to fleece.

The sounds and sights were so sweet and so soothing that Daphne walked slowly, and the sun was spreading his last faint flush over the cloudless heaven and over the tree-tops, as she reached the Thorne's house. .

"Work? go out? it ain't much o' that I can do nowadays," was Jael's blunt answer, when she had found out the schoolmistress's errand. But she looked up at the young fresh face framed by the low doorway, and softened suddenly.

"Sit down, won't you? You're young to be a schoolmissus, I take it, or else you carry your years

very light. It's a poor place this for genteel folks to come in." And she brushed her apron over the chair she had placed for her visitor.

"Jonathan Cleare it was then as told you?" she went on interrogatively. "Well, he'd do a good turn for me, and I'd do anythink for him as laid in my power, I would."

"I should not like you to come if it put you out," said Daphne.

"My dear," said Jael—"I beg your pardon; I didn't ought to make so free, and you a stranger—it ain't for the likes o' me to think whether I'm put out, or whether I likes this or don't like the t'other. It's all as the Lord likes, and he knows the best, so folks says."

Jael raised her hand and pointed to the ladder. Daphne's eyes followed it to where the top (not a great way off) lost itself in darkness.

"There's one a lyin' up there as I can't leave for no one. He ain't like to live long, and while he's here I mun bide with him."

"Is he very old?" asked Daphne, looking at Jael's haggard face, and at the hair streaked with grey that had escaped from her old black cap, and was resting on her shoulders.

"Fourscore and ten," said Jael. "Would you look at him? He'd take it very kind if you would."

Jael toiled up the ladder; Daphne followed her carefully and found herself on a dark landing.

"Take care o' the hole," said Jael, "there's a board broke there."

"It is very dangerous," said Daphne, seeing that she could look straight down into the room below through the hole.

"Dangerous? Ay, very like it is. But there ain't no one to git hurt not now. Fader he'll never leave his bed no moor,—and my gal as used to be wi' me—" She broke off suddenly and turned into the little garret.

"Fader, here be a lady come to see ye."

"Not a lady, Master Thorne," said Daphne, coming forward, "only the schoolmistress. I am very sorry to see you ill and in bed. The time must seem very long to you."

"Ay, times he do," said the old man thickly. "Mostly of a mornin' when there's the work a-going for'ard—the horses to water and sich."

Daphne looked enquiringly at Jael.

"Don't take no notice," Jael whispered. "He thinks o' times he's wanted to work. He thinks he hears the master a-callin' of him, and that he can't goo. He worked well, he did, in his day." And she raised her voice at the last sentence.

"Forty year along o' Mr. Falk," said the old man,

his eyes brightening as he turned them on Daphne. "A good master he were, and we never had no words.

"You courted mother o' those days, didn't you, fader?" said Jael, drawing him out. She knew the things he loved best to remember.

"Ay, I courted her o' those days. Fine wench she were, and sarved along o' Master Falk. Still and quiet she were, and feared the Lord. Baked she did beautiful—didn't lay heavy on your stomach, it didn't—and milk, too, she could—there warn't never a cow as 'ud let fly at her."

"Has she been dead long?" asked Miss Lynn, turning to Jael.

"How long is it sin' mother died, fader?" said Jael, who knew the day and the year by heart. He did not like any but himself to tell that tale.

"Thirty year come Midsummer: we hadn't on'y her"—looking at Jael—"and my wife she were al'ays wonderful ar'ter boys—and the Lord he guv' her her wish—but He took her life from her. She died, and the boy—and I buried 'em together o' a Sunday mornin'. And I came home—and the house were quiet like and still. And there were her sunbonnet a-hangin' up agin the wall—and the worsted and the pins as women has, a-lyin' in the basket in the winder. And I prays to the Lord and I says, says I, 'O Lord, as guv me my good partner, and as has took her clean

away, keep her right agin I come and fetch her, and don't be too hard upon Josiah Thorne.'"

He broke into tears, that Jael brushed from his face with her apron.

Daphne took the old Bible, and read to the dying laborer that pastoral Psalm—"The Lord is my shepherd."

He wept again, but they were quieter and happier tears.

"He were al'ays for me. He never run foul o' me. The Lord, He knows I done my best by Him, and He al'ays done His best by me."

"You'll come agin," said Jael, as Daphne rose to go.

"Yes, I should like to come and see him again."

"And I'll look in every day for an hour and put things straight for 'e, if that's any good," said Jael.

"It would be a great deal of good," said the schoolmistress, "if you could come while I am in the school and make things comfortable for my mother. I have a mother that is to me what your father is," she added, smiling.

"I'll come," said Jael decisively. Daphne read the stamp of poverty upon every thing in the strange little dwelling. How good to be able to help these poor folk as she could now do.

What sort of charwoman would Jael make? That

thought came second. But Jonathan Cleare had recommended her: and though the room below was in sad disorder, Daphne had noticed that the room above, where the bedridden father lay, was scrupulously clean.

Jael's own words explained the enigma. "Fader 'll never leave his bed no moor—and my gal as used to be wi' me——"

There was no place for honest pride in the little room below, where the foot of a visitor seldom entered, and where the aged master would never set his foot again.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN ESCORT.

AARON FALK was under the elm-trees as Daphne began to recross the field. He was bending over a sickly ewe, and discussing with a friend the state of the fleece, which he turned over with his cane.

He was a well-made, erect man, and his dark hair was brushed back smartly from his not unpleasing face. He looked a younger man than he was; time had not dealt unkindly with him. With many of the attractions of youth, he carried the stability of later years. And to some women, even while they themselves are young: nay, perhaps, all the more *because* they are young, this is the greatest of attractions. It was not thrown away on Daphne Lynn.

And Mr. Falk's face, if somewhat stern in repose, was all the pleasanter for the change brought upon it by a glad surprise. His color came, when, at the sound of her foot on the sward, and the ripple of her gown over the cowslips, he looked up, and found Miss Lynn a few yards from him.

The farmer was left to study his flock alone. The sickly ewe, with a feeble bleat, dragged herself on to her legs with a struggle, and ambled painfully away. Aaron Falk, with his hat raised, was saying "Good-evening" to the schoolmistress.

"You've got an arm-full there," he said, smiling at her burden of cowslips; "I hope you will let me carry them for you."

"Thank you very much," said Daphne, who wanted to save her dress, and had no hands to pick it up with; and she put the flowers into Mr. Falk's hands.

He carried them firmly grasped, and held out before him, as if he were quite unused, as indeed he was, to this sort of thing. Daphne gathered up her gown.

"You've got it wet," he said, "the dew is falling. You must not get cold; that would never do."

He blushed at finding himself speaking so familiarly to her. He felt he was talking with cool indifference when he meant to be respectfully diffident. It was the first time he had ever been conscious of real shyness, and the feeling was so strange that he hardly knew how he behaved under it.

"You would have less singing on Sunday," she answered, laughing.

"And that would be a loss," said the brewer, but almost under his breath.

They walked on in silence after that for some little

way. More and more dreamily came the cawing of the rooks as the elm-trees on the hill were left behind them, and as the twilight, with its soothing stillness, crept over the land. The thrushes trilling and piping in the hawthorn hedge that bordered the road below them, and the sound of their feet treading rhythmically together alone broke the silence.

Daphne, rather at a loss for a subject of conversation with the rich brewer, said, after a while, "I have been up to that lonely cottage on the hill—at least, beyond the hill. Thorne, I think, is the name of the people; an old man and his daughter. They seem to be very poor; and the house is such a miserable place. Is that the Squire's property?"

"Well, no—not exactly. It's a poor place, but they might make it better if they liked. He built it himself. He's a queer creature, and a worthless tenant."

Mr. Falk spoke hurriedly, and fidgeted with the cowslips, two or three of which fell to the ground.

"I thought him such a nice old man," said the schoolmistress, in a disappointed tone; "I am very sorry to hear he is not as respectable as he seems."

"Oh, there's nothing so much amiss," said the brewer; "he's like most of them. I'm carrying these badly, Miss Lynn." And he dropped a few more cowslips, which he stooped to pick up.

Daphne picked some up, too ; but her thoughts were still with the Thornes in the lonely cottage.

"The woman—Jael I think they call her—is coming to do for my mother. She has a rough manner, but there is something I like about her."

Aaron Falk looked up, startled. "Indeed," he said dryly, compressing his lips.

Jael going to work again, was she ? What might that mean ? Would she be able to do now what she could not do of late—support *more* than the old bed-ridden father ?

And, in any case, *she* was to be about the school-mistress constantly ; going out and in of the house ; letting fall bits of gossip, tales of her own struggles, hints of who knew what ?

The walk by Daphne's side had been so sweet a moment before. Watching her was a happiness now to Aaron Falk ; talking to her alone was a great and rare happiness.

He was not a man who was sensitive to outward things, who had a keen eye and open ear to the sights and sounds of nature. But, unconscious of it as he might be, the rooks and thrushes, the pale green sky, the leaping lambs, the faint sweet smell of Daphne's cowslips, had conspired together to make that walk a time to be remembered.

It had been a great opportunity—when might he

see her again alone? And yet he had let it slip; he had said nothing that could reveal to her the state of his feelings towards her. Let it slip? No, it had been filched from him by this ill news, this "little rift" that made "the music mute."

Such a little rift! The news that Jael Thorne was going to work for the schoolmistress.

They came to the dusty road, and turned up it.

"I need not take you out of your way, sir," said Daphne.

"I hope I may ask you, as a favor, Miss Lynn, not to address me in that way."

Daphne looked surprised, and laughed.

"I thought it was quite usual," she said.

"From the people in the village, yes," he said—then hesitating, "but not from—not from you; I should be glad if you could be less formal—if I might venture to be on—on an easier footing with you, Miss Lynn. I cannot express what I want to say—what I should wish to say, but——"

"Thank you," said Daphne, startled in her turn, more by the brewer's agitated manner than by his words; "we are still hardly more than strangers, sir, though my mother and I are much indebted to you for many kindnesses."

She stood still; she thought there was no occasion for Mr. Falk to escort her further.

"I must go home, now," she said, and her manner had become a little cold and dignified. "I am much obliged to you, but I can take the flowers now."

Andrew was lounging at the door of the forge, waiting for Jonathan to come and take a stroll with him.

"Look here, Jonathan," he said, turning his shoulder and speaking over it, "there's Master Falk and her. He's making good running."

Jonathan, who was taking his coat off a peg on which some rusty horse-shoes were hanging, came forward and looked out.

Aaron Falk and Miss Lynn were standing together on the road; she was taking the cowslips from his hands; she was speaking, and the brewer was looking at her with a flushed, earnest face.

Jonathan turned upon his heel, and looked impatiently for his cap.

"Let's go out," he said, clapping it on his head, and shoving past Andrew, through the doorway.

"Good-evening," said Miss Lynn to Jonathan, as she passed, turning her soft grey eyes on him, and then on Andrew.

Jonathan raised his cap and made a sort of obeisance.

Daphne colored. What did it mean? Was he mocking her?

Andrew noticed it, too, and wondered.

"Well, I never saw *you* put yourself out so before; one 'ud think you'd been learnin' dancing. But she's like to be the brewer's lady, and so it ain't so much amiss."

They did not walk long that night. Jonathan was out of sorts and "cross-grained," as his friend called it.

He had not the satisfaction of knowing that all the evening Miss Lynn sat puzzling over his mock-reverence on the road.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SILVER SPEECH?

JONATHAN had often heard Mr. May speak from the pulpit of the "sea of life." It seemed to him in these days that he understood for the first time the meaning of the well-worn simile.

No sooner had he left the trough of one wave than he was on the crest of another. A few weeks ago, to be at his ease with Andrew, to be sitting in the same pew in church, to see his honest face looking in at the forge-door every evening, with "There you are at it,—ain't you goin' to give over? It's gone six this twenty minutes,"—a few weeks ago, this state of things, then unattainable, had seemed to Jonathan to be all that he could wish for, all that was needed to make life flow on evenly once more.

But he and Andrew were more than reconciled, and yet peace had not come. A fresh trouble was on his spirit. He never spoke of it to any one. It was not Jonathan's way to confide his troubles. It would have been almost as hard to him to tell them out to all the village gossips as to confide them to his mother and to 'Drew. Trust them he did, entirely: often he long-

ed to pour out his soul as 'Drew could do so easily. But an unconquerable reserve forbade it.

Indeed he would hardly himself recognise the cause of his unrest. When the knowledge sprang up suddenly before him, that, like other men, he had begun to love, and that his love was unreturned, nay, was never likely to be returned, he put the idea from him almost with scorn. And when the monotonous clinking of the hammer on the sounding iron did not serve to rock memory and thought to sleep, not only beat out a melancholy echo of his own feelings, he changed his mood to despondency.

Things had never gone right with him from first to last. His career had been checked; his father's health was never likely to be better. God had never sent him any fierce trouble heretofore, but neither (so it seemed to him) would He send him any great good fortune. Some people in the world had all the prizes, and some had all the blanks: and Jonathan made up his mind to the twilight of a joyless life.

To his mother he was kinder and more tender than ever. And she noticed very little change in him. He was not a gay lad at any time, always hard-working, and late of coming home. And then, in the evenings, he took to his books, or looked after his flowers in the window and the garden.

"I don't think as the warm weather suits Jonathan,"

she would say sometimes. "He don't seem as fierce as he do in the winter. His father there, he seem a little better when it gits warm."

"Well, we can't order our weather, can we?" said Martha Male. "The Lord knows a deal better than we do what we want. If we ordered the weather, we shouldn't have no weather at all. *You'd* want two sorts, let alone all the other folk."

As Jonathan went about among his flowers, he often saw Mr. Falk, spruce and erect, walking up the village street to the school-house.

Sometimes he would come back in a few minutes, and then Jonathan knew Miss Lynn must be out. He fancied the brewer at those times looked crestfallen. At other times an hour or more passed before his step came down the road, and the cane swung regularly at intervals over the privet-hedge. There was no dejection then in the brewer's gait. It seemed to Jonathan each time that his fate must have been decided, so elastic was his quick tread, his face set in such satisfied repose.

One evening, a soft June evening, the well-known step came by. Mr. Falk made a point of not looking at the Cleare's house as he passed. He looked straight a-head, and to-night he was whistling softly. There was no cane swinging over the hedge. He was looking down at something he carried carefully.

Jonathan rested on his spade, and followed him with his eyes. He had been in the habit of working on, and not looking up, when the brewer passed: there was little they could have to say to each other now. To-night he did not feel inclined to shun him. He threw down his spade, and went to the gate from which he could see up the road. Mr. Falk had something large done up in a newspaper, which he held with both hands. He was crossing the road now to the school-house-gate.

Jonathan hardly knew why he did it, but he opened the gate and let it slam noisily. Then he leant against it, with his arms folded. He wanted Aaron Falk to see that he was watching him.

The brewer turned round, and then continued his way to the school-house.

Jonathan walked down the road after him. Some perverse spirit had taken possession of him. He would be there to meet him when he came out.

To say—what? To say nothing—what was there to say? But he felt Aaron Falk's cup was too sweet, was overflowing, and he knew the very sight of him would be a drop of bitterness. Why was he to have all the smooth sailing and the green pastures, while other and better men smarted under the rod of an unjust fate?

He walked as far as the gate and looked down the play-ground to the school-house. There was the

brewer in the doorway, and Miss Lynn herself was letting him in.

Jonathan turned on his heel. What a fool he had been! What was all this about, this rising in his throat, this heat in his face, this thumping of his heart? What could he do, if Miss Lynn chose to marry Aaron Falk?

His head went down a little. There was one thing he could do. One word, and Aaron Falk's chance would be destroyed.

Something green was trembling on the dusty road before him. It was a spray of maidenhair fern. He stooped and picked it up. Miss Lynn had had more flowers then, to-night—that was a nosegay that the brewer had carried so tenderly, wrapped in newspaper. Should he speak this one word? The one word that could ruin Aaron's hopes, and—set Miss Lynn free?

It was getting late—it was time to speak now, if the word was to be said, the word that would save her. And would it not be misery to a woman like Daphne Lynn to be married to Aaron Falk?

His color came, and his heart beat faster as this thought came to him—that it would be a duty to her as a true and pure woman to tell her all. Perhaps, said Jonathan, arguing to himself, his face turned still down to the dusty road—perhaps it would be a sin to keep silence.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

GOLDEN SILENCE.

PERHAPS it was a sin to keep silence. Jonathan paced restlessly up and down the road, after the village had betaken itself to sleep. One after another the lights were darkened in the windows, first in the lower windows, then in the upper. Only about the doors of the "Red Inn" a knot of men lingered and gossiped.

They were out of Jonathan's hearing, but had he been close by, he would not have been the wiser. He had no ears for anything but his own thoughts; and these seemed to him to be speaking aloud.

One word, and it was all over with Aaron Falk. Should he say the one word to-morrow, to Miss Lynn?

He colored, thinking of it. It would be a base thing to do behind a man's back, baser than ever after his promise of silence. And if the brewer could do base things, there was no need for Jonathan to follow him. He would be straightforward, whatever he did.

But he could say the word and yet be true. He could meet Aaron Falk, and give him warning that very night, that to-morrow his secret should be a secret no longer.

Not for his own sake, said Jonathan, but for hers. For the sweetest woman—he paused in thought—was that the opening of a door, the click of a latch? Was Aaron Falk coming?

He could not hear for the beating of his heart. He walked rapidly up the street again. Now he heard voices distinctly in the stillness of the evening, voices in the school-house garden.

He went up to the large gate opening on the playground, and leant over it. The garden was beyond it; he could see figures moving. He stood there straining his eyes to watch them. Jonathan was a shy man; he had never leant on the school-gate like that before; he had never stared into another man's garden as he stared now into Daphne Lynn's. He had forgotten reserve and manners; everything was lost in a passionate jealous dread.

He could hear the sound of her dress against the laurels, he could hear her voice and the voice of Aaron Falk. He could just see the schoolmistress's figure moving to and fro, for the gown she wore was light, and showed against the creepers on the house, and the shrubs in the garden. And now and then

against the sky, where the shrubs were lower, he saw the outline of Aaron Falk's hat.

The church clock struck nine, and the throb in the bells after each stroke vibrated through the silent, milk-warm air. A nightingale in the copse was warbling out its heart to the scent of Daphne's roses. And yet all was trouble and weariness of spirit to the young man leaning on the gate.

Was there no way out of this—no way of dashing the cup of bliss from lips that so ill deserved it? Was there no way, said Jonathan, bending his face upon his arms, of doing what he wanted to do, without becoming less of a man and of a Christian?

Perhaps it was mean even to break the condition of his promise, mean to try and hold a man by his threat, as, a minute ago, he would have liked to have held Aaron Falk.

But there was another way. Jonathan raised his head. Where had the thought sprung from? What was it that brought to his mind a promise, hitherto forgotten—but that might be claimed *now*—

"If ever I can do anything for you in any way, let me know, Jonathan; *I'll do it whatever it is*—and there's my hand upon it."

Jonathan was staring on fixedly before him, but he saw nothing. He was hugging the remembrance of that promise to his sore heart.

He would wait there by the gate if another hour went by before the brewer left the company he liked so well. He would remind him of that promise, he would claim its fulfilment that very night.

"The one thing shall be this," said Jonathan, shaping his speech as he waited on, "I've kept silence for you, and I'll keep it on *one* condition—that *you* keep your promise, Mr. Falk. And the one thing I ask, and that you're bound in honor to grant, is this—that you give up your new hopes and your promised happiness, that you have done with courting a woman that's as far above you—"

Jonathan started. A hand was laid on his shoulder. It was Mr. May.

"Good evening, sir," he said, taking off his hat and moving a few steps from the gate.

"You're out late, Jonathan," said the curate. "Are you enjoying the beautiful night?"

"Not exactly that, sir," said Jonathan, with a clumsy attempt at a laugh.

"You and I are the only people about, I think," said Mr. May. "All the village folk seem to be asleep."

"Not quite all, sir," said Jonathan, bluntly, "though one would think it was time they were."

"The men at the inn-door I suppose you mean? They dispersed as I came by just now. He seems

a steady fellow, that Jonas. I often come out in the evening to see there is no disturbance, and I don't often hear any noise. Why, Miss Lynn is about still, and her mother—there they are in the garden. And Falk—that's Falk, isn't it?"

The blind woman's quick ears caught the sound of voices at the gate. She came across the playground, feeling before her with her stick.

"Good evening, sir. We have a beautiful evening, sir. We're picking roses, or looking at them, I don't know which."

"I never saw her so cheerful," said the curate to Jonathan, as he turned away from the gate. "Poor thing, she would be glad, I dare say, to see her daughter well married, but I don't know what we shall do without her in the school. You'll have to be master, Jonathan; you're the best educated man in the parish. Is your trade prospering? Do you get much work?"

Jonathan was obliged to follow Mr. May, who, while he spoke, walked slowly homewards.

"Not much, sir. Nothing prospers much with me."

"I know you have your hard times," said the curate, kindly, "but you have one blessing that's priceless. I don't say it because I'm a clergyman, but because my experience has taught it to me. The

knowledge of having done right, of having sacrificed one's self for others—that's worth all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. God has blessed you with a sound body and a sound mind, and He has kept you straight heretofore: and the richest men can seldom say that. Keep true, and God will help you. I have never known Him to forsake His own."

Jonathan looked down again at the road. The minister little knew his thoughts, or he would not have spoken so to him. At other times, or from another man, Mr. May's speech might have seemed cant.

Now it seemed to Jonathan the one word he needed. He had never been ashamed of trying to do right. He had taken the way that seemed right as a lad, and he would stick to it.

He would not be mean after all, even to Aaron Falk. Revenge and threats were mean tools for men to ply.

He took off his hat and said, "Good night, sir," as he came to his own gate, and went indoors quietly.

But the curate did not know how his few kind words had soothed the young man's troubled spirit. He did not know that he had lifted a veil from Jonathan's eyes, and showed him his thoughts and intentions in a new and startling light.

It was not for Daphne's sake that he had wanted to ruin Aaron Falk in her eyes. Self was at the bottom all through, and he had been deceiving himself.

It was not for him to avenge sin, or to hold the knowledge of it over a fellow-man. A greater had said, "I will repay."

And for Miss Lynn, as far above him, Jonathan the blacksmith, as the stars above the elm-trees, he might trust God and the angels to see after her.

His love for her went out in a prayer that night that God would do what was best for her, and keep her from the evil.

CHAPTER XL.

JUST WHEN THE RED JUNE ROSES BLOW.

"**H**E must have cared for flowers, at all events," Daphne was saying, as Mrs. Lynn and Mr. Falk discussed the poor dead schoolmaster. "I never saw such quantities of roses, and such large blooms."

She stooped over a large full-blown tea-rose, which she touched lovingly with her fingers.

"They are beautiful when they come to that size," said Mr. Falk.

"I think the buds much prettier," said Miss Lynn; "I am half sorry when they begin to open."

She passed from rose to rose, and the brewer followed her, picking his way gingerly among the little flower-beds. Once her dress caught on a thorn, and he disengaged it.

"Thank you," she said; but she gathered up her dress, and did not let it fall again. She was too simple, too little engrossed in self to see attentions where they were not meant, or to see them easily when they were. But there was something in Mr. Falk's manner that was unmistakable, and she was not

inclined to encourage him at present, whatever might be her feelings hereafter.

For Daphne Lynn did not say to herself that nothing should ever induce her to marry Aaron Falk. He had been very good to her and to her mother, and she was not more indifferent than other women to the advantages of what is called a "suitable" marriage.

But it must be suitable in a wider sense than the conventional one. She was formed in too sensitive a mould to face the idea of a loveless life. If her heart could go where money was, it might be well. It certainly would be well for her mother, whom she loved much better than herself. But she had no idea of marrying for the sake of a good home and an independence. So she did not compromise herself as yet in any way; and if she had been asked, this June evening, whether she meant to marry her rich suitor, she could not have answered.

Perhaps, like other women, she was too undecided on a point in which, it is often said, there should be no indecision. At all events, Daphne Lynn was different to many women in this—she would not have blushinglly denied that Aaron Falk cared for her. She knew no false modesty; and she took the fact that he loved her just as a matter of plain fact. Women and men were loving each other every day, all the

world over; and if the brewer had been her first lover, which he certainly was not, she would have taken it as quietly as she took or rejected his attentions now.

At present, she felt she was quite capable of being tired of the company of her faithful admirer. He came so often to the school-house, upon one pretext or another, and Mrs. Lynn encouraged his visits so much, that her daughter often wished that the brewery were not quite so close at hand.

Where were all her mother's good resolves gone to, about "keeping to themselves"? Only the winds knew. Mrs. Lynn had never been so happy, so little querulous, so hopeful as now. Daphne was not to slave all her life at teaching. Golden prospects were before her: and the cup of happiness was every day coming nearer to her lips. She had never tolerated a lover before: it was a more than hopeful sign that she certainly tolerated Aaron Falk. What girl in her senses could refuse such a man, and such a home? Mrs. Lynn was going to say "match," but she thought "home" sounded a great deal better, and used it. We all speak two languages, and translate from one to the other rapidly, and with ease, as occasion requires.

"The roses are all named," said Daphne, lifting a label. "They are beautifully written—you could know

it was done by a schoolmaster," she added, with a laugh.

She dropped the label. The ardent lover lifted it, of course, though it was too dark to see the name very distinctly. He recognized the hand, however: nearly all his own labels were written by Jonathan, in the days when he and the young blacksmith were on comfortable terms.

But he said nothing while Miss Lynn credited Mr. Byles with the copper-plate writing. Jonathan's name was not pleasant now in his ears, and did not come easily to his lips. Of late he had had reason to resent some small things he had seen: an interview between Jonathan and Miss Lynn in Mrs. Cleare's garden, when the schoolmistress had gone to visit Mrs. Cleare and had accidentally found Jonathan at home: and a look or two he had seen cast by the young upstart at the harmonium on Sundays. Jonathan needed no trumpeter, he thought. He wanted keeping in his place.

Unwillingly the brewer had to retire at last, when Miss Lynn insisted that it was too late for her mother to be out any longer.

But as they went into the house, having parted with him, and Daphne closed and bolted the window in the parlor, the scent from his greenhouse flowers was almost as sweet as the June evening among the

roses. Daphne could not help putting her fresh face to them before she left the room.

Next day between school-hours, Jael, stumping about in the parlor, and helping Daphne to clear the little table for dinner, said bluntly,

"Don't grow in your garden I take it. You're wonderful lucky at getting flowers."

"You don't grudge them to me, do you, Jael?" said Daphne, noticing an irritation in her tone.

"Grudge 'em? I never grudged nobody nothing, let alone you. But the smell of them flowers don't suit me."

"Almost all flowers suit me," said the schoolmistress, thinking Jael very hard to please.

"Ah, bless your heart—you're like my gal. She were al'ays arter the primroses and vi'lets and them in the copses. She don't git no flowers now I'm afeard."

The tears had come into Jael's eyes. Daphne had never heard her speak of this child before: Jael was always reticent on every point, most of all on the subject of her own home and history.

But a friendship had sprung up between the mistress and the charwoman, and Jael was softening unconsciously under the gentle influence of Daphne Lynn.

Something in her manner, however, forbade inquiry about this child. Perhaps she was dead, thought

Daphne, and said nothing. But one day, when she told Jael she wished that not for an hour or two but for all the day she could feel that she was looking after her mother, the answer came,

"Work *all* the day? If I could do that my 'Scilla wouldn't be where she is now. I'd have her home and fend for her, if I had to die for it."

Then Daphne ventured to ask where 'Scilla might be.

Jael, ironing at a table, pointed over her shoulder with her thumb and said,

"It's the place as all the poor has before 'em when they're old. But it ain't many as has to go there before they're eighteen years, as my gal's done. But the Lord 'll put it right some day. I think He'll punish the one as brought her there before He's done with it."

"Does she come to see you?" asked the school-mistress, with interest.

Jael shook her head. At first she could not answer. After a while she said, with a sob in her voice that went to Daphne's heart,

"She's got that there as she loves better 'an me. She don't think long for her mother, I reckon."

CHAPTER XLI.

A GALA DAY.

JULY came hot and fierce upon Shelbourne lying in its cradle between the squire's swelling, down-like fields, on which the elms stood, breathless and motionless, in a quivering veil of air, and against the most cloudless of July skies.

Dust on the roads, dust on the hedges, dust rising in clouds behind the carts that rolled lazily along from the Red Inn to the Brewery, and from the Brewery to Hepreth, while the carters waded in the dust, with hot white boots, and the horses' sleek sides steamed as the evening came on, and the air grew cool enough to show it.

The birds had ceased singing; the very weathercock, that emblem of change, stood motionless: the cows lazily chewed the cud, with hardly energy enough to sweep their tails round, to scare the black flies that gathered thickly on them. All nature lay in a deep sleep—the sleep of a flushed child in fever, too still and heavy to be a sleep of unmixed rest.

Only man toiled on, fighting against nature. Drays must still go to Hepreth; carts must still supply the

Red Inn; the hay-time had been, and was long since over: harvest was at the door: there is no holiday making, for the English laborer, or the English brewer or farmer, who, though their summer is so short when compared with southern summers, cannot afford to sit down under their vine, or to lounge in the sun on hot door-steps, as the darker races can. They have little sympathy for the sun, these colder-blooded English people. They will stand frost and snow well enough, and take rainy days as a matter of course; but they chafe under the sweltering heat of July days; and no wonder, for "men must work" in England, however hotly the sun may shine.

Strange to say, the Shelbourne children braved the heat better than their fathers, and skipping-ropes were still to the fore, and games of hopping and racing went on in the playground, under the mid-day blaze of the sun.

But inside the school they began to feel the heat. Faces that had been bright and wide awake over the skipping or the hopping, became dismally sleepy over the spelling-book and before the blackboard. The little ones nodded in their corner: a fat little figure, with dimpled legs and arms, might here and there be seen at full length upon a bench, the curly head turned upon the rosy arms, and a rosier pair of lips pouting in sleep over the half-closed fingers. And

Miss Lynn had winked at the breach of discipline, and let them sleep on.

Now July had come, and holidays came with it; six weeks of silence in the play-ground, and of peace for Miss Lynn.

Daphne closed the books for the last time thankfully. She was fond of her work, and of her children; but she was also fond of quiet. She longed to be free to walk in the copses in the evening, and to keep in the house with drawn blinds during the hot day: to do what she liked—most of all to have some time to think.

Through the summer the brewer's attentions had not slackened. Rather they increased, and as the sun got into mid-heaven so Aaron Falk's love for Daphne Lynn rose to a greater strength.

He was restless, miserable, confident, wavering in turn. Despairing he was never. He had no cause to despair. Everything was in his favor: position, money, his home, his appearance and manner—he knew all these counted with women. If Daphne Lynn married him, she would be making as good a marriage as it was possible for her to make.

Yet—he had no cause to be certain of success. Daphne was always frank and open with him, civil, perhaps almost cordial, but nothing more. He longed sometimes to see her look restrained, and shy in

his presence, to see her feel as he felt, when they were together. He longed to hear her voice falter when she thanked him for his flowers, to see the color come to her face when he appeared, or leave it when he left her.

He could not deceive himself into thinking this had ever been the case. He could not feel he was part of the schoolmistress's life, as she had become part of his; it seemed to him that in the years that border upon middle age the fervor and the suffering of a boyish passion had overtaken him. And he felt that if this love should be unreturned, the wound would not heal with him as it heals with the strippling. He would not look back from maturer years, and say of it "that folly," as younger men and women can. His life was to be blessed or not blessed: he was to be happy or not happy. It was to be Daphne Lynn's sweet face in his cheerless home, or nothing. No other woman had won his esteem and love before; no other woman could win it again. He had never wished to marry, he had never thought of marrying, until her face had come across him. His money, his beer, his public-houses, and the distant respect of inferior men, had hitherto sufficed him. Now he felt all those were only of value to him, in so far as they helped him towards winning Daphne Lynn.

I think there was a meaning and a depth in this love of the calculating, civil, cold-hearted brewer that he did not in the least understand himself. We none of us understand it when the glamour is on us, and the object of our love stands before us, filling up the foreground, and leaving no landscape to be seen beyond.

But I think, though he would have denied it, that it was not only Daphne Lynn, a woman, that Aaron loved. He had, as baser men than he have, a yearning after the good and the true and the beautiful. He knew his life had been an unhallowed life; he wanted to hallow it now. He had not the strength of purpose, the love of righteousness, to lead him to the higher paths and to keep him there. But he knew goodness and truth when they came near: he longed for them when they were beyond his reach. Perhaps it is hard on Aaron Falk, but the thought suggests itself—were they not the possessed of devils who gave the loudest witness to Christ's purity and power? Peter and John knew him as their Master, not as the Son of God: the darkness of fierce evil first recognized the contrast of His spotless purity.

But the possessed entreated Purity to withdraw from them. Poor Aaron Falk wanted to have his incarnation of goodness for his own.

At the height of his fever of hope and suspense, came the school holidays, and the School Feast. It was always a great day in Shelbourne, and mothers and sisters shared in the fun, sitting round under the limes in the field at the Place, and drinking Mr. May's tea, and eating his bread and butter with a good heart.

Mr. Falk never failed to attend the School Feast as the noise waxed merry and the afternoon wore on. He would have come in the morning too, if he could have been with Daphne while she arranged the cups and saucers; but he had past the stage when to meet her in "a crowd" could be a pleasure; he wanted to say one thing to her now, to ask one question. He felt the chatter of children, the mild babble of Mrs. Myse, the officious interference of the farmers' daughters, who always came to help, would be intolerable. He would go later, when the children were playing, and he might find Miss Lynn alone.

He had piles of accounts to go through that morning. But as he ran his finger down them, again and again the total slipped from him. He was away in the field, and he could see her. Would she be under the limes when he got there? Would Mrs. Myse leave her, and would Daphne leave the children, and walk round the shrubbery with him?

His hand trembled as he started once more down the unhappy column, and jotted down the total hastily, in case it should escape him again.

In the field long tables were being arranged. A pile of snowy cloths were making their way over the grass towards them in Jael's arms. Mrs. Myse in a large black hat, and Miss Lynn in a white one with a blue ribbon round it, were standing at one end of the first division of the table.

Mrs. Myse was testing the steadiness of the tressles.

"I think it is all right," said Miss Lynn; "there is another coming."

"It is sure to be all right if Jonathan sees to it," said Mrs. Myse. "There is something so reliable in Jonathan. I never feel anxious when he is to be had."

It was Jonathan who was carrying the boards for the remainder of the table. Behind him came Ben Bower, whom Mr. Falk had spared for the occasion bringing the remaining tressles.

Jonathan had the boards over his shoulder, and his head was bent as he came along.

"Jonathan, my dear lad, don't strain yourself," said Mrs. Myse anxiously. "What a load for one man!"

He put down the boards, and they fell together on the grass with a clank. He tossed his hair off his

forehead and passed his handkerchief across it. It was not till then that he saw Miss Lynn.

"Good morning, Mr. Cleare," said Daphne softly. He thought there was a sound of reproach in her tone. He had quite forgotten the bow he had made her in a jealous impulse long ago. Daphne had forgotten it too, till now.

Jonathan raised his cap. Many people raised their caps to Daphne Lynn. She looked "such a lady," as the Shelbourne people said. Mrs. Bellar said she was "stuck up": but only Mrs. Bellar, who had never forgiven the dismissal of Eliza Ann.

Mrs. Myse went away to give some directions in the house. Daphne began unpacking a clothes-basket, full of cups and saucers.

"You get the forms," said Jonathan to Ben Bower. "Can I help you?" he said to Daphne, who was by this time on her knees in the grass, laying ranks of mugs, all fitted into each other, beside her.

CHAPTER XLII.

TOWARDS EVENING.

JONATHAN spoke very little to Miss Lynn. He watched her going up and down, setting the cups upon the tables, or spreading the large white cloths with her small hands. He watched the lights and shadows on her face under the shade-hat; the small determined mouth, the quick gentle ways, that many others than Jonathan, if they could have had the chance, would have watched too. Now and then she raised her earnest grey eyes to his face, when she asked him a question; and Jonathan looked at them a moment, and thought they were like no eyes he had ever seen before; and then looked away quickly at the may-trees or at the limes. They were not for him, those eyes: what use to look at them?

He had learnt to give up what he cared for most: he could do it again, since he must do it. The first sacrifice had involved another; for if he had been away now, and a prosperous mechanic, this face would never have troubled him. And it was the one face he knew that could. Rosy, comely country

maidens had never touched Jonathan's heart, or made it ache. It was the still, pale face, which bewitched Aaron Falk, that had conquered him at last.

And yet he could say nothing to her ; he could only hold his peace. What would his fourteen to nineteen shillings a-week (and how hardly earned they were), and his humble trade, look, in *her* eyes ? She had seen his home, two-roomed, and tiny ; she knew him best in his work-day clothes, hammering in the dark forge, a common blacksmith.

And she was better born he knew. Her father had been a small farmer. Perhaps the grandfathers of both were on the same footing ; but a step once made among the humbler classes is not easily forgotten, or given up. Once a farmer's daughter, always a farmer's daughter. The son of a laborer could be no match for her.

He should never tell, he knew, how strangely her presence stirred him. He was a man of few words ; and where his feelings were concerned, Jonathan became a sealed book. And, as for speaking now, what was there to say ? He did not hope to have the schoolmistress for his wife ; at least he said he did not. He only wanted to see her, to watch her, to have a look sometimes into the depth of those grey eyes.

She was going to be the brewer's wife, all the

people said. Should he care to look into her eyes then? Could he do it then? Jonathan started when that thought came to him, and said he had no hope. She was going to have a good home, and he hoped she would be happy. He could not help feeling that she must be happy anywhere, because anywhere she would be loved.

Presently the children came defiling through the field. Mr. May said grace. Miss Lynn marshalled them quietly into their places. It was wonderful how she managed them, without any loud orders or bustle. She lifted her hand, or let it fall, and all the hundred and ten bright little eyes hung upon it, and understood the sign.

Jael was plodding backwards and forwards with hot tea in cans. Ben Bower presided over the milk. The bread and butter had been cut and stacked at the Place by the farmers' daughters and Mrs. Myse.

There was a great silence among the children. deep in hot tea, and with their mouths full. Only the replenishing of cups and mugs went on; and hands shining with soap were stretched out for more and for more.

The sun beat down fiercely, but the tables were under the lime-trees, and balmy breaths of air stole in now and then, and stirred the children's hair, and made ripples in the tea. The sunbeams danced out

and in over the white cloth, and over the parterre of gay Sunday hats and cloaks. And, as hunger was satisfied, voices began to rise in a happy half-whispered babble.

"You may talk as much as you like, my dears," said Mrs. Myse, rubbing her hands and smiling. "We wish you to be happy, as well as good to-day."

This had the effect of producing a deep and profound silence. No one had anything to say.

"I think they have done, Ma'am," said Miss Lynn. "Would you be so kind, sir, as to say grace?"

She turned to Mr. May, who had moved away a few steps. He had gone forward to meet Aaron Falk.

The brewer had his hand in the curate's; but every one saw his eyes had gone beyond him, to where Daphne Lynn stood.

He forgot the hundred and ten bright little eyes, Miss Sophy's, and Miss Maria's keen interest in his affairs, Mrs. Myse's gentle knowing peeps from under the thin black fringe of her parasol. He was at Daphne's side, and holding her hand.

Every one saw that his color changed; that from the moment his eyes had rested on her he had not been the composed self-possessed Aaron Falk they all knew so well. Daphne, who was not agitated as he was, felt that every one had seen it, and a shade of pink came into her face. The brewer's heart leaped

for joy when he saw it. It was the first time she had shown any embarrassment in his presence. He hailed the token as full of hope.

Mr. May said grace. The children, led by Miss Lynn, chanted the Amen. Then she said, "You may go now;" and the forms were pushed back, and they tumbled over each other into the grass, picked themselves up and ran on with wild shouts of glee, dispersing themselves over the field.

Meantime Jonathan had been putting up swings in the field, swings of all heights for children of all sizes.

He always put his heart in his work, as Mr. Falk used to say, in the days when Jonathan pleased him, when Mr. Falk's books and maps were all at the disposal of the young blacksmith. He did not look round, though Miss Lynn was at the tea-table, till his job was over. Then he came leisurely back across the grass with a twist of rope in his hand.

The children rushed past him. The table was empty, except at one end where a knot of people (not children) were standing.

Mr. May and Mrs. Myse were there; Miss Sophy and Miss Maria, farmer Bates' daughters, and two or three other assistants were there. Daphne Lynn was there, and a child was clinging to her skirt; and close behind her, trying, as Jonathan thought,

to put himself between her and the rest of the group, stood Aaron Falk.

Jonathan came up to Mrs. Myse, and touched his hat.

"Shall you want me any more, Ma'am?" he asked.

"Not to help, thank you, Jonathan, but we shall want you to have tea, after all your kind exertions."

"No, thank you, Ma'am," he began; but Mrs. Myse, turning to Daphne, said—

"Miss Lynn, would you kindly make Jonathan a cup of tea?"

Daphne went to the table at once; the child still clung to her skirt, and followed her.

"I am afraid it is cold, Mr. Cleare," she said; "you must be very tired; won't you sit down?"

"No, thank you," he answered; but he came and stood near her, only a few feet from her.

He did not want the tea; he would have liked a glass of beer much better; but he wanted this from Daphne's hand. A savage pleasure seized him when he saw the brewer standing, disconsolate, under the limes, obliged now to devote himself to Mrs. Myse.

It might be the last time he should ever speak to her; something in Mr. Falk's manner made him think the crisis could not be far off. To-day it might be settled, and then he could never look into those grey eyes again.

He was looking into them, standing near her, strangely miserable and strangely happy, when a sharp cry close beside them caused every one to look round.

Ben Bower and Jael had been clearing the table; they were putting the mugs one into the other, and laying them in the basket.

And the cry came from Jael's lips.

Daphne ran to her.

"What is it, Jael? What is it?" she said, kneeling down on the grass beside her, for the poor woman had sunk down upon it, and was as pale as marble.

Jael made no answer; there was a gurgling sound only in her throat; she was either fighting for breath, or trying to speak.

"Has she been ill?" they asked of Ben; "did you notice anything before?"

"She been a-holding her heart this few minutes, but she often do that; I didn't take no count of it; she mostly holds that when she's tired; she looked up queer at some of you there, sir, and then she cried out; but she'd been breathing hard a few minutes, like she was out o' breath."

"Poor Jael, my poor Jael," said Daphne to herself, reproachfully; "I've not been thinking of you at all; I know she gets easily tired; she often holds her

heart and complains of a pain there," she added, turning to Mr. May and Mrs. Myse, who were standing over her.

Daphne had unloosed Jael's gown at the throat, and was chafing her cold hands.

"She ought to have brandy," said Mr. Falk, obliged to come up and show some concern. Then he retreated again, and walked about the field examining the swings.

Mr. May followed him, after Mrs. Myse with a flushed face had consulted with him in a whisper.

"Falk, I am afraid we have no brandy; you know we can't afford such things; may they send for some to your house?"

"Send! Oh yes, of course," was the answer; "send Ben."

The next thing that Aaron Falk saw, was Jael Thorne being led across the field, and out into the road, by Jonathan, whose arm was supporting her; and on the other side was the schoolmistress, on whose shoulder Jael's hand rested.

Should he send a cart for her? The thought came to him, and then stuck in his throat.

But as he saw her feeble uncertain steps, and knew that Daphne Lynn was going to be taken from him, that he might not see her again that day, he changed his mind again.

"Ben, go and ask if the light cart can be of use—if it shall follow them. And if they want it, harness the grey mare and put her to."

The answer came back.

"Jael 'ud rather go afoot, sir. She's coming round again."

Mr. Falk looked vexed.

"Alfred, dear," said Mrs. Myse, calling him aside and holding his button, "may I ask poor Mr. Falk to supper? I do think he wants an opportunity, and it would be so nice. Fancy having that dear little woman at the brewery!"

"But the dear little woman has gone," said Mr. May, smiling.

"Yes, but she'll be back for supper. She and her mother are both to come. But I have not asked the Bates; and there is the cold mutton, and I have made a cake."

Alfred May thought it was seldom he could give his aunt a pleasure. And, if the truth be told, he was as anxious as she was that Miss Lynn should marry his good friend, Mr. Falk. So he nodded his assent.

Aaron Falk was not engaged; he would be most happy to come.

He went about amongst the children all the remainder of the afternoon, playing with them, even

swinging them. He talked to the women who sat in groups upon the grass with their babies; he held the transparently thin parasol over Mrs. Myse's head while she did the same.

These things were not after his own heart. But the afternoon was passing; the shadows were getting long. Soon the screaming and the swinging would cease, and he should see Miss Lynn again.

But why had that fool Jonathan gone with her?

And why had Jael fainted?

He put the last question from him without answer. He had nothing to do with the poor charwoman or her state of health

CHAPTER XLIII.

"PIMPERNELS DOZING."

"**I** WISH as you'd go back, missus," said Jael, as they passed the brewery and the church, and took the turn to the field, the shortest way to Josiah's cottage.

"I can't go back till I see you better," said the schoolmistress. "Are we going too fast, Jael?"

Jonathan slackened his pace. Jael was leaning heavily on his arm, and her steps were still uncertain, but the livid bluish color had left her face.

"What did you feel?" asked Daphne, with concern. She had never thought to see Jael walk home again.

"Feel?" she repeated, feebly, "I don't know as how I felt. But I'd been feelin' sadly through the carryin' and that, and the heat; and I knew as a straw 'ud upset me. And, somehow, I looked up, and seed him—and—"

Jael stopped short. The perspiration came out on her forehead. She felt she had made a false step, for Jonathan's hand had touched her arm suddenly, and she knew it was to silence her. She had forgot-

ten that she was not alone with Jonathan ; her head was still giddy and bewildered.

"Saw *whom*?" said Miss Lynn, with a strange anxiety in her voice, looking first at Jael and then at Jonathan for an answer.

Jonathan was looking straight ahead. His face had a new expression on it—that Miss Lynn could see. She could not interpret the look, but the meaning of it was the thought chasing through his brain—why had he been a fool, and silenced Jael? *He* could never be a traitor and break his promise, even to Aaron Falk ; but he might have let another do it, and been blameless : the cup, so close to the brewer's lips, might have been snatched away at that moment, but for his foolish impulse. Another instant, and Jael would have betrayed at least that, in some way, Aaron Falk had wronged her, that the sight of him had "upset" her, as she said. Even at that moment, Jonathan knew that the first impulse had been the right one : "but, O God," he said to himself, "how hard the right way seemed!" Was there no time when a little evil might bring about a great good? And this time he was tempted to no evil, to no slandering of another man for his own selfish purposes, to no movement of dastard jealousy. To keep silence, and let Jael speak, was all that he needed to have done. It seemed to him that that one

quiet movement of his hand was all that stood between himself and Daphne Lynn, and he himself had upheld the barrier that divided them.

A moment after, he remembered all the other barriers that Jael's words could never have removed. He remembered that if Miss Lynn refused Aaron Falk to-day, it would not make him, Jonathan, a fit match for her. His eyes fell. He turned them on Daphne with a look of penitence, as if he had been doing her an injury. Ah, if she could know the devil that possessed him sometimes, she would not be walking with him now.

"It has been very hot," said Miss Lynn; "you ought not to have worked as you did." But they both knew by her tone that she was quite aware her question had been unanswered.

They went slowly on in silence. The cool grass was pleasant to their tired feet; the sound of Daphne's dress upon the daisies made a soft rippling accompaniment to their troubled thoughts.

So soft, that at last the trouble melted away, and only the rippling went on, soothing them all, and making the sweet evening sweeter.

The sun was only halfway down the heavens; it was still too warm for walking fast, even if Jael's strength had been equal to it.

"I'm keepin' you long," said Jael, her hand still

on Daphne's shoulder. "I can walk now, Jonathan, lad, without your arm, on'y keep a-nigh me a while longer."

"We are not in any hurry," said Daphne, "we like going slowly; at least," she added, hastily, "I can answer for myself. It is heaven to be walking through the fields on such an evening. But—do you want to go back?" she asked, turning to Jonathan.

He colored.

"I'd a deal rather go on," he answered.

"There ain't no flowers now," said Jael to Daphne; "you miss the flowers, I count."

"Yes; I miss the flowers in the fields and woods: they are more beautiful than any garden-flowers. But there are a few here; there are some pimpernels going to sleep."

She did not stoop to pick them, for Jael would have lost the support of her shoulder. Jonathan fell behind.

"Well, I'd never say that, if I'd got roses like your'n," said Jael. "Jonathan, lad, the missus here says she favors the field flowers the best. She don't make no count o' your roses."

Jonathan had come to Daphne's side. He had a little bunch of half closed pimpernels in his hand. He was holding them tenderly, but not offering hem to Miss Lynn.

"How pretty!" said she; "so small and yet so beautifully made."

"He made a good job o' it, did the Lord," said Jael. "He didn't scamp His work, not with the lest of 'em."

"Have you got fine roses?" asked Daphne, turning to Jonathan, who still held the pimpernels in his hand.

"It's the roses as grows in *your* garden, I mean," said Jael, standing still a moment to rest. "He planted 'em all for Muster Byles," and she pointed to Jonathan.

"Did you?" said Miss Lynn, with pleased surprise. "I have always wondered how a man who had such bad health could have managed them so well. We have had such roses this year, Mr. Cleare. I don't think you have ever seen them."

"Are there any left?" said Jonathan, looking wistfully into her face. Perhaps she might ask him to come and see them.

"A few," said Daphne. "Will you come and see them? We should be so glad if you would come and look at them at any time, whether I am at home or not."

His face fell. "Whether she was at home or not." A cold invitation. Yet what had he hoped for?

Daphne saw the change. She wondered how she

had pained him. She watched him as they turned down the lane. What Mrs. Myse had said was very true. There was something very "reliable" about Jonathan. And it seemed to her there was something more in him than that. There was that indescribable we-know-not-what that makes us feel a subtle sense of sympathy for some who come across our paths.

He had known trouble; that Daphne Lynn could see: though she did not guess that even now he was troubled, that now he was fighting a harder fight than when he gave up his career and his ambition five years ago.

She only knew of the one struggle, and she thought as she looked at him that she should like him to be her friend. She felt he had picked the flowers for her. She held out her hand as they reached Josiah Thorne's cottage, and said,

"Will you give me those pimpernels?"

He looked up with a quick, keen glance. Was she mocking him and his half shut flowers?

But there was no mockery in her face. And silently he gave her the flowers.

A little, a very little of their bright color passed out of the land of dreams where they had gone to, into Daphne's quiet face.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A CRISIS.

JONATHAN stayed to help Jael up the ladder. Then he bid them good evening and went home.

He could not trust himself to walk home with Miss Lynn, even if she had allowed it, which he thought very doubtful.

He went back thinking how near to her he had been at every step of that sweet evening walk. He kept as close to the very path they had taken as was possible across the trackless field. Sometimes he fancied he could see their trace upon the grass, a whiter shade of green where her dress had passed over the meadow; the spot where he had stopped to pick the pimpernels—the pimpernels that she had taken.

His heart gave a leap, tumultuous rather than happy, thinking that she had asked him for them, that even now they were hers, and in her keeping.

'Drew was in the village street talking with some other men just home from work, when Jonathan came up.

"Had your supper?" asked Andrew.

"No; I don't want supper. I am going up to shut the forge and see after the fire. Come up, won't you?"

Andrew followed him with his hands in his pockets.

The cool of the evening had hardly set in yet. It was still close and warm, though the sun had gone down and the dust kept rising under the feet of workmen going home.

The two friends sat down on the bench outside the forge, and smoked the pipe of peace together. An hour went very quickly, and the soft grey twilight of a summer evening, that is neither light nor darkness, but a tryst between the two, crept silently over the village. The happy tired-out children were all asleep, though on other summer nights the mothers, who were not averse to knitting in the gardens or on the road themselves, let them roll on the grass or in the dust, as they liked, till the low crowded rooms were cooled by evening breezes, and sleep was possible. But to-day, all through the heat of the afternoon, they had romped, and see-sawed, and swung till in sheer exhaustion they had flung themselves down under the lime-trees, and had shaded their eyes even then from the glints of sun that shot down through peepholes in the dense foliage. If Miss Lynn had been there they would have asked for stories, and

would not, they all knew, have been refused. But Miss Lynn had gone away with Jael Thorne. So they lay upon their backs and made themselves happy as only children can, while Mr. May and Mrs. Myse and their elders sauntered through the field or rested on the benches at the tea-table.

"After tea," said Mrs. Myse, trying to look unconscious, "we will all go into the shrubbery. It is so sweet there on an evening like this."

Miss Sophy and Miss Maria Bates and the other farmers' daughters who had not been asked to supper, had taken themselves away. Mrs. Myse, with unusual caution and diplomacy, had not allowed it to transpire that Miss Lynn and Mr. Falk were to remain. Miss Sophy and Miss Maria had ceased to hope for the honor of any attention from the rich brewer. Jealousy had never fanned the flame of their warm interest in him; for he had never favored other maidens with his smiles. To-day they had exchanged glances, seeing his unusual manner with the schoolmistress. But it was not likely *that* meant anything; Mr. Falk was not the person to make so bad a match as *that*. The farmer's daughters, who spelt indifferently and dressed worse, looked with condescension only upon Daphne Lynn, who had to earn her bread, and teach naughty village children all day long. No wonder she always dressed so quietly;

what else could she afford? And Miss Sophy adjusted the pink rose nodding at the side of her hat as if in approval of her kindly reflections, and tossed back the shining brown curl that strayed upon her shoulder.

Mr. Falk was "not a marrying man," said Miss Sophy and Miss Maria, and so comforted themselves.

"Come down and see the swans," said Andrew, when he had knocked the ashes out of his pipe. "It's too hot for supper or sleeping. Let's take a turn. I'm cramped with sitting here."

They went down to the gate of the approach to the Place, and opening it, leant over the parapet of the bridge to watch the swans. Andrew had brought some bread to throw to them.

The hen had gone to her nest with her downy little ones. They could see her, a white spot among the osiers on the other side. The other swan was on the water, his long neck turned under his wing. It seemed as if he, like other people in Shelbourne, was loath to go to bed on such a night as this. He woke up and came proudly rowing himself to the bridge, when Andrew called, and the bread made circles on the still water.

While they stood there they heard voices in the shrubbery walks. It must be Mr. May and Mrs. Myse out walking. Jonathan and Andrew felt no

shyness at being within the grounds; all the people were allowed now to walk there. Indeed, the fences and palings were so broken down and useless that to forbid it would have been folly. Who could prevent the children from coming in to pick the wild flowers that grew there so plentifully? And if the children came, why not others. Mr. May liked to see his people about. It flattered him, poor man, that he should have anything they cared to share with him. He liked them to share his pleasures, and if the moss-grown walks and tangled shrubberies pleased them, it pleased him too to see them there.

When the voices had died away, Jonathan and Andrew walked on. They were both thinking of the night when last they had been here together, coming so troubled and leaving so comforted.

"I ain't nearer the truth now than I was then," said Andrew to his friend. "And yet I know I'm not down-hearted like I was. It's all along of being sure of you, Jonathan—of being able to speak out my mind."

"You haven't been to see 'Scilla, have you?" asked Jonathan, as they walked on and turned into the winding paths.

Andrew shook his head for answer.

"I'm glad you haven't; it would be of no use," said Jonathan. "I'm glad you haven't been."

"I know she's happy enough," said Andrew, pulling the petals out of an ox-eye daisy he had picked, and looking down. "I ast Jael after her, and she al'ays tells me she hears as she don't make no trouble at all. That keeps me quiet, it does, and I don't think I could bear to go and see her, if I speak the truth. You don't think there's anything I could do for her, do you?"

Jonathan did not answer. Andrew looked up and heard footsteps on the walk. They could see no one yet, but they could hear voices coming nearer.

"It's more than I hoped for," a man's voice was saying; "it makes my life look different even—"

The speaker stopped suddenly. Aaron Falk and Miss Lynn were face to face with Jonathan and Andrew.

Daphne had had hers turned away when first Jonathan saw them. She was looking into the shrubs as if to avoid Aaron Falk's gaze. And he was gazing at her, his hand was stretched out as if begging for her hand; and she was wavering only, uncertain, not indignant.

As they came upon Jonathan and Andrew she had colored deeply, as deeply as was possible for that pale face.

Aaron Falk had colored too; but his blush changed to an angry annoyance when he recognised the two

young men who had thus interrupted him, who must have overheard his passionate avowal to Daphne Lynn.

Andrew said "Good night sir," and stepped into the grass to let them pass. Jonathan stood still in the path a moment, and looked the brewer full in the face.

"Let this lady pass," said Aaron Falk, angrily; "have you forgotten your manners, Cleare?"

Jonathan mechanically moved off the path. He noticed no anger in the brewer's tone. His own thoughts were enough for him just then.

Miss Lynn looked up, and their eyes met. She looked at him, and it was more than a passing glance. Jonathan felt that; but the meaning of the look, how could he interpret it? Eyes like Daphne Lynn's are so often full of a strange, wistful earnestness, when a hard heart is hidden beneath their veil.

They passed by, and Jonathan stood still on the spot where he had met her. It was all over now. The crisis had come; and Miss Lynn had the prosperous man, with his money, his lovely house, his education, his manners, his love, at her feet.

And she had *looked away only*, when he besieged her ear. "If she had not cared for him," said Jonathan, "she would not have been there with him alone." His "life seemed different," the brewer had said.

Well might it seem different.

Two hours ago Jonathan's life seemed different. The sun was up then, and they were walking together, he and she, through the summer fields.

Now the sun had set. A walk in the shrubbery, a meeting in the path, a few words overheard—and the illusion was dispelled.

It could not be a bitter blow, said he to himself, for he had never known hope.

But, ah! if it might have been someone else that Miss Lynn had blessed—anyone but this man, Aaron Falk!

Mr. May, Mrs. Myse, and Mrs. Lynn passed him by, not fifty yards behind the happy lovers.

"We shall all like it," Mr. May was saying to Mrs. Lynn; "it is what my aunt has long hoped for."

CHAPTER XLV.

ANDREW'S DREAM.

IT seemed to Jonathan that a year passed over him in the half-hour that it took him and Andrew to reach home.

He was vexed with himself; it seemed to him he had fallen in his own esteem. For, all through, he had told himself that his feeling for Miss Lynn was—well, he could not say what it was, the experience being so new to him—but there had been no hope, he said, mixed with his jealous concern for her welfare.

Now he knew, by the dull pain at his heart, by the sudden deadness of the evening sky and of the landscape, that he had before felt to be beautiful and soothing, that hope had been with him, and had now taken flight. It is a thankless task to try and paint a sorrow like this. In later life we wonder at the pain it was possible in youth to suffer; or we forget that such suffering ever was for us, and smile over the foolish, imaginary griefs of a younger generation, with the complacency of a longer experience and a superior wisdom.

But the pain is none the less hard to bear, because half its sting is added by the growing-pains of youth. And it is enough to say that Jonathan suffered as the young only suffer.

All the more he suffered because no one had yet found the key to the locked chamber where he hid away all that seemed to him too sacred for telling. Not that he would put it in that way, for he was little given to naming or analysing, and only knew that it could not be with him as it was with Andrew, who poured out his heart freely so soon as it was burdened. The more a thing weighed upon Jonathan's mind the more he kept silence.

It was the worse for him in more ways than one, for he had many a stab from his friend's lips that he might have been spared if he had been less reticent and Andrew more discerning.

But the time had come for even Andrew's eyes to be opened. He had been too long a scholar in the school of affliction not to see that his friend was another man after the encounter in the shrubbery walk.

And now it was his turn to keep silence. He felt he could not touch upon Jonathan's trouble unsolicited. Plain Andrew was conscious that his friend's reserve set its seal upon his lips also. A man of keener intellect and coarser mind would have felt no scruple

in telling Jonathan that he had discovered his secret. Andrew was the reverse of this; if his intelligence had not helped him to guess the truth before, his feelings prevented his intruding the knowledge of it upon Jonathan now.

But the careless allusions to Miss Lynn and Aaron Falk ceased. The schoolmistress became a sealed subject between the two friends. And Andrew came oftener than ever to the forge, and took his mate out with him to have a walk, or to smoke on the bench outside the house.

Sometimes, if Jonathan were out later than usual, after some job in the village, he would find 'Drew sitting on his bench, waiting for him. Jonathan would have brought a book, and read while he waited. Andrew never read, except out of his prayer-book on Sundays. He sat cross-legged, holding his knee, or whittled a stick with his pocket-knife.

One sultry August evening, ten days after the walk which had decided Jonathan's fate, 'Drew sat longer than usual cross-legged on the bench, waiting for his friend. Though it was past work hours, the sun was still hot and the air heavy. Andrew soon became drowsy. His head went back on the black boards of the shed, for Jonathan's shop was a humble wooden building, and his eyes closed.

But still the sun glared down on him. It seemed

to Andrew that as it travelled down the side of heaven it came nearer, burned brighter, and stared him in the face. He got up impatiently and tried the forge door, which was closed. It was locked, but he knew where to find the key, under a wreath of wild clematis that Jonathan had trained over the low roof.

He opened the door. The cool darkness more than rewarded him for the exertion of rousing himself to find the key, which he had done sulkily enough, winking his heavy eyes, and using strong language alternately to the sun and to the door.

Leaving it ajar, he threw himself on a bench, crossed his arms to make a pillow for his head, and fell asleep.

Meanwhile Jonathan was plodding home from a neighboring farm, where he had been sent for to put the boiler right.

To his surprise he overtook Jael at the top of the village.

"I never expected to see you out again so soon," he said. "And you don't look fit for it now."

"I ain't fit. Nor I don't think I shall be fitter. But I don't like to think 'o the schoolmissus bein' put about because of me. I thought I'd ask Martha Male give me a cup of tea, and then I'd go and see what I could do at the school-house."

"Mother 'll give you tea, and welcome," said Jonathan after a pause.

"It 'ud put your father about, very like, thank you kindly all the same," she answered. "Abraham Male, he's a still body and don't make no trouble o' nothin'."

Jonathan felt what she said was true, and pressed her no further.

"The thing as lays at my stomach now," said Jael, breathing heavily from the exertion of walking, "is that there chap's comings and goings over yonder," and she pointed to the school-house on their left.

Jonathan said nothing. They reached the little gate that led up a narrow gravel walk to the forge. A tiny approach it was, not four feet long and hardly two feet wide. But Jonathan had narrowed it by digging a border on either side, where peas, tied to stakes, filled up the background, and large scarlet poppies nodded in the front. Beyond the peas on one side a patch of potatoes separated the forge from the rest of the village. At the other side fields began. The Red Inn and the school-house stood on the opposite side of the road.

So it was a safe place for Jael to speak, and when she was with Jonathan her usual reserve broke down. The burden that lay at her heart could only

be eased now by speaking to him. She showed this so plainly that he never had the heart to divert her from the subject. And now, though it pained him, he wanted to hear her speak.

"He's al'ays a-comin' and a-goin'. He's arter the missus sure enough. And to think as she that's so good and comely is to be matched along of him; it goes agin me that much, Jonathan, I hardly know how to keep my tongue. And yet it ain't no place o' mine to be speakin'. I'll sit down on the bench, Jonathan, agin the door. That walk's a'most too far for me now, I reckon."

"I expect it's too late for you to speak now if it could do any good," said Jonathan, drily. "The time's gone by for speaking."

"You don't mean to say you think she's promised herself, do you?" asked Jael, showing in her faded eyes the woman's keen interest in such affairs, as well as a stronger feeling against Aaron Falk in his unmerited prosperity.

"Jonathan," she said, when he made no answer, but stood beside her vacantly, looking out over the poppies at the dusty road; and she raised her small, withered, worn hand from under the threadbare shawl, and clenched it,—“will you tell me what the A'mighty's a-doin' of, that Aaron Falk, as has spoiled

more lives than one, that's the cause of my gal bein' put away in the 'house,' that ain't got no more heart in his body than a cuckoo has,—what's the A'mighty a-doin' of, that *he's* gitten' all he wants, and that another one, as comely as my 'Scilla, very nigh (though I says it), and a deal wiser, should be put in his way and given to him, without no trouble, nor never a word? The Lord's ways is past finding out—I've thought it many a time, and I'm a-thinkin' it agin to-day."

Jael had dropped her large umbrella with a sharp rap upon the stone before the shop door. When she had finished speaking she rose and stooped to pick it up.

It was then, when Jonathan bent to get it for her, that he noticed for the first time that the door that he had locked was open. Some one had rifled the shop, was his first thought. The last stroke of ill-luck had fallen.

He pushed open the crazy door and saw no thief, but Andrew, with his mouth and eyes open, leaning forward upon the bench, his eyes red from sleep, and his hair ruffled, but his attitude that of earnest attention.

There was no need for Jonathan and Jael to look at each other with a mute "Has he heard?"

They both saw he had heard, before he recovered himself enough to stand up and speak to them.

If any of the three doubted, it was Andrew himself, who passed his hand across his forehead, and wondered whether he had slept and dreamed.

CHAPTER XLVI.

IN THE FORGE.

JONATHAN threw his cap down, and seated himself on the bench.

"Sit down," he said to Jael, pointing to a rough chair propped up against the wall. She was trembling, and her color had changed. She stood hesitating, uncertain whether to obey Jonathan and her tottering limbs, or the dictate of the nervous terror which had seized her and which would have driven her to the door. She was not a woman who knew fear, and the knowledge that she was afraid now, and afraid of Andrew, frightened her still further. She sank down in the chair.

Andrew sat on, staring at her, and still silent.

"Don't look at me like that—don't, 'Drew, it's more than I can bear!" she cried, half sobbing, as she untied the faded strings of her bonnet that seemed as if they must choke her. "I did it for the best, I did; I couldn't 'a told you—Jonathan there, he knows I couldn't."

Andrew drew a long breath and then he said,

"You lied to me, Jael. And I as believed you

all through, I as thought you were a true woman, and that you were as dark about it all as me."

Jonathan touched his elbow. His face said, "Don't be hard on her, she can't bear much now."

"I couldn't 'a told you. If I'd 'ave told you— Jonathan there, he'll tell you what 'ud have happened to fader, let alone to me."

"You needn't have lied, woman," said Andrew, fiercely. "You needn't have said by God you didn't know—"

"I didn't say that," she interrupted him—"I said I *couldn't tell you*, 'Drew; no more I couldn't. I have telled ye so all along."

"You *knew* what I meant when I asked you," said Andrew, angrily. "You *knew* I went away and thought we was both in the dark, both on us together. But I might have trusted a woman to be shuffle-tongued. I might have known they'd only say the truth when they meant you to believe a lie."

"'Drew, you needn't pitch into her," said Jonathan. "I've kept the secret as well as her, though I hope I've told you never a lie. I don't think I ever told a lie, knowing it. I never was brought up in that way, and I never saw good come of it."

"And there won't good come o' this," said Andrew, rising, his color rushing to his face as he made for the door.

"Hold hard there, and don't be a fool," said Jonathan. "Listen to the reason why we didn't speak before you blame Jael."

"Reason!" said 'Drew, scornfully, "well out with it then. I should like to know the reason as obliged her to lie about a thing that's so near to me—that's changed all my life like—that's—" He sat down and put his hands over his face, leaving his sentence unfinished.

"We gave our promise not to tell—that's the reason," said Jonathan, "and a good reason too. And if Jael's been put to it how to give you an answer when you kept asking and asking, it's not much wonder."

Jael was wiping the perspiration from her forehead with trembling hands.

"I can't stand up for myself, and I ain't a-goin' to," she said, presently. "I may have done wrong, and if I have it's not the fust time. But I don't see as it 'ud have mended things for you if I'd spoken out; and it 'ud have killed fader if that there man had turned him out o' his bed. He ain't going to be long in 's bed, he's druckening every day; he won't live over another fall, he won't. And while he's there I'd as lief he were left in peace. You'd lie, may be, 'Drew—if I did lie, but I didn't—if you could keep the roof over your mother wi' lying."

Andrew was silent. Jael's casuistry was too much for him. He saw the state of things more clearly now. Aaron Falk had used threats to bind over Jael.

"Villain!" he said, between his teeth; "and what's more, a sneaking villain. But how did he make *you* keep your tongue?" he said, turning to Jonathan, not without a touch of suspicion or irony in his tone.

"Partly the same way as he made Jael," said Jonathan a little hotly, looking Andrew in the face. "Partly because my head, such as it is, told me it would be best for you if I held my peace. It would be best if you didn't know now, I take it. You can't master yourself now."

"Don't fall out," said poor Jael, seeing both the young men were getting angry; "it's the A'mighty's doings, and what are we to say agin it? If I've done wrong by you, 'Drew, I'll ast you forgive it, and willin'. I feels too near my time now, to have no feelin's agin nobody, and I'd like 'em all be straight wi' me. So I hope you don't feel no other than friendly to'ards me, 'Drew; leastways, I hope you won't, in a while, when you've got by this, a bit. I ain't fit to stop and have words, I ain't. I'll be gettin' on, Jonathan. Good night to you, Jonathan. Good night, 'Drew. My lad, I trust to you not to

“speak till fader’s gone. It won’t be long you’ll have to wait now.”

Jonathan watched her out of the little gate, and then came back. Andrew rose, and they stood together in the door-way; he had made no answer to Jael’s words, had never answered her good-night.

“The Almighty’s doings!” he repeated bitterly, when she had gone. “Maybe that man there,” and he clenched his fist, as he pointed to the brewery, “maybe he talks about the ‘Lord’s doings.’ If it’s the Lord’s doings when women lie, it’s the Lord’s doings when men sin and ruin their fellow men and women. I hate that talk, I do, about the Lord’s doings.”

“I believe you’re right there, ’Drew,” said Jonathan, pacifically, and earnestly, too, for he felt what Andrew said was true; “there’s a deal of things put to the Almighty’s account that ought to be set down in our books instead. There’s many things we can’t understand: when that mill blew up at Hephreth—the poor little children you’ll see there in the hospital, burnt and bruised, and with all manner of sicknesses. But when things are put out of gear all through our wrong-doings, I say with you, it’s not fair to blame the Maker. It’s plain enough how the mischief came then. But I think you’re too hard on Jael. She couldn’t do other than hold her tongue.”

"She needn't have gone to try and deceive me." said Andrew; "that's what I can't abide."

"Well, if she did, you mustn't be hard on her. If she was put to it, it wasn't much wonder; and it's for none of us men to be hard on her. We're truer than woman by a long way, I believe—truer than the common sort of women," said Jonathan, slipping in the amendment eagerly; "but only because we've less to fear. It's fear makes us lie, and be double-tongued—fear and love. And we've not got so much of either of those as the women have, by a long way. Look at Rebecca there, what she did for Jacob."

"Well?" said 'Drew, "and what do you think of her for it?"

"I think it was as mean a trick as ever a woman played. But I tell you what more I think; and that is, that Jacob was a deal meaner."

"I don't see that," said Andrew.

"Don't see it? Why, Rebecca did it for her son, because she cared for him. But Jacob—he robbed his brother, and deceived the old man, too, and all for himself. If he'd have done it for his brother, I think I'd almost say a good word for him, for all he was a sneak. Well, Jael, she did it for her father and for you. She thought it would be the death of him if Falk turned them out; and so it

would," added Jonathan judiciously, for he was not yet quite sure of what Andrew might do, if Aaron Falk came across his path. "And she knew it would be bad for you to know too; and I think it *is* bad if you can't be a man and master yourself, now you know the truth. Because you could do no good if you hit Falk on the head to-morrow. But for Jael's sake and the old man's, you daren't make a business now. You must be as if you didn't know, that's all."

"Yes, it's easy saying 'that's all,'" said Andrew, impatiently. "If you had set your heart on a girl, as I did, and—" he stopped short, remembering.

"I'd say, that what isn't to be, isn't to be," said Jonathan, looking away from Andrew, and turning his eyes as quickly away from the school-house on which they had rested. "It isn't being a man, to spend your life fretting after any woman, or any man's wrong doings."

"It's fine for you," answered Andrew, hastily, "to speak like that. But you ain't been robbed of your sweetheart by the blackest villain that ever broke—"

Jonathan made some sudden movement that caused Andrew to look up. He did not finish his sentence. The expression on Jonathan's face was one that his mate had never seen since he had left Hepreth Hos-

pital. He was not sure that even there he had seen its equal.

He tried to turn the subject. It was for him to smooth things now. He did it awkwardly, as was natural.

"Well, we know what sort of wife you'd like," he said, laughing forcedly. "If she lied, or didn't lie, it 'ud make no odds to you; you think it's all right for women to be liars. You think so light of 'em."

Jonathan looked down at his friend, for he could look down, with the nearest approach to a sneer that was possible to him, on his face.

"If women that can lie would suit me," he said, "it would be easy finding a wife. They lay to your hand every day. But I didn't come of a woman that lied; and I've no taste for it. But I do feel as I can pity those who have, and who are put in a strait. And as to thinking light of women—I wish to God——"

And then he too broke off. It was the nearest approach to a confidence he had ever made.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"IS IT AY, OR NO?"

WHEN Jael reached the school-house door, she saw Miss Lynn seated at the window writing.

It seemed to Jael as it would have seemed to the other villagers, that this was the most natural occupation for a schoolmistress. Indeed Daphne had become amanuensis to many of the Shelbourne folk, her neighbors. If a daughter at service were ill, and inquiries had to be made to set the mind of an anxious mother or lover at rest, or if a son got into trouble away from home, and the father was confident a letter from him would set him straight, the schoolmistress was the first person to whom they would turn to write such a letter.

She was pleased to be of use to them, and they all thought "she did make out a beautiful letter." All the more perhaps were they satisfied because she wrote down exactly what they wished to say in exactly their own words. Only by the force of habit she naturally corrected the grammar, and wrote words as Dr. Johnson spells them, and not as they sound.

It was not for poor Jael to discover that Miss Lynn was writing a letter a little out of the common sort to-day. But she did notice that the glib pen hesitated for long moments together, that her face looked a little careworn and anxious, and that at the same time there was the least flush of excitement on her cheek.

Daphne Lynn, usually so composed and serene, had been anxious if not troubled for ten days past. That evening after the school-feast, as they walked through the shrubbery, at the Place, Aaron Falk had asked her to be his wife. Jonathan had guessed rightly in that, but in one thing (and that a very vital point) he had jumped too hastily to a conclusion. Miss Lynn had not accepted the brewer's offer.

But neither had she refused it.

Her mind was unsettled. She liked Aaron Falk, and she was flattered by his devotion. She felt that in wishing to make her his wife he must be acting with complete disinterestedness. Everything pointed unmistakably to the fact that what would be a good marriage for her would be a very poor one for him. She esteemed him as an honorable man, who was acting honorably and generously towards her. She was touched by his goodness to her mother, and that was a very tender point with her. If her mother could be happy, and spend her last days in

peace beside her, if she herself could pass a life that would allow of her devoting her time more to her than she could at present, these would be great inducements to Daphne to accept the brewer's offer.

And in accepting it, she would be taking a step that would please Mrs. Lynn as nothing else could. Long since she had set her heart upon it. Long since she had taken the line of appearing to believe no other issue was possible. It had pained Daphne at first, but little by little, as the course of things began to run more smoothly, the mother became more silent and discreet ("leaving well alone," as she and Mrs. Myse whispered together), and the daughter more reconciled to the possibility.

Reconciled? she would have said to herself, if the word had forced itself upon her; what was there to be reconciled to? She liked Mr. Falk and he loved her. It was everything that could be desired; her lines had surely fallen in pleasant places.

She felt no passionate attachment springing up, after daily intercourse with him, that is true. She did not feel it even after the declaration of his love. But she said to herself that it was not in her nature to love passionately. She was born for the ports and calms of life. And how many people made shipwreck of their passionate loves, after all! And Aaron Falk was so much older than she was, there must naturally

be a large preponderance of respect in her feelings towards him. Boys and girls fell in love in random foolish fashions. But she, the schoolmistress, twenty-four years of age, and wooed by a man no longer young (in her eyes at least), must not go in for such follies.

She had no past story to tell her what love might be, she was not as yet tempted by its sweetness to forego everything for it.

And yet she could not give Aaron Falk an answer when he asked her to marry him, in the shrubbery-walk. She told him the plain truth—that her mind was not made up, that the step was too momentous to be taken hurriedly, before she was sure they could be happy or not.

"*Happy?*" he had repeated after her, and the tone of fervor and of pain in his voice frightened her. His confidence, his eagerness were such a contrast to her cold uncertain frame of mind, to her composed, chilly sentences. If he expected her to respond in all their intensity to these feelings, she had better refuse him at once.

She told him so; but he was touchingly humble, touchingly content to wait. To hear she had not any feeling of repugnance to him was a relief; to hear he might hope, had made "all the difference in his life."

And for ten days she had been communing with herself about the answer. To-night, she had told herself, it must be given; her mother had been telling her so for nine days past.

But before she wrote it she forced herself to look honestly, as she thought, into her own heart. There were no secrets there; but were there any leanings? Could she ever repent afterwards if she married Aaron Falk? Could she say, "I have known nobler men than him?"

She answered that she did not know enough of Mr. Falk to decide this utterly. But all lovers must leave something to the future, something for experience to decide. The lover could not quite show what the husband would be, nor the woman that is being wooed, the wife. She marvelled when she thought of her lover's perfect faith in her: how could he know for certain that she would make him happy?

She allowed to herself, as she sat combing her hair before the little glass upstairs, the morning before the letter was written, that other men (she put it carefully in the plural) had moved her sympathies more than Mr. Falk. She had seen other men lead nobler lives than she knew him to lead, but that was only, perhaps, because she had heard of incidents in other men's lives, while she had heard little or nothing of Mr. Falk's life. And if these other men had awaken-

ed feelings of sympathy, of very warm and deep sympathy in her mind, she had called forth little or no response in them. A noble man, if he had loved her, might have roused a deeper feeling than she could have *at present* for Aaron Falk. At present, said Daphne with marked emphasis, leaving a wide sea of possibilities of good in the future; *might*—but what was the use of wasting life in “mights” and “mays” that could not be?

All through the mazes that she wound through, Daphne kept up the plural number. Other *men*—other *lives*. And yet she was thinking of one man, seeing one face, admiring one life; and knowing that the one man who could have conquered her affections, neither cared to do so nor dreamt of making the attempt.

That Mr. Falk loved her was certain. That she liked him was certain. That she could keep him no longer waiting for an answer, was certain.

And that when she accepted him she would make no show of a depth of feeling of which she was innocent, was quite as certain.

In the evening she sat down to write her letter.

“Dear Sir,” she began. It was hardly the way to address an accepted lover. She took up another sheet of paper, and wrote—

“Dear Mr. Falk,—I have been considering for ten

days past the question you put to me. I beg your pardon for having so long kept you waiting for an answer. Perhaps you will forgive me more readily when I tell you that I am prepared to give you the one I believe you desire. I do not pretend that my feelings towards you are such as those you have so kindly expressed to me. But I feel your generosity and kindness very deeply, especially in the way you have acted towards my dear mother, in offering her a home, and it will always be my pleasure as it will be my duty to show you I am not ungrateful."

After some hesitation, Daphne added, "I shall be away from home to-morrow morning, but my mother and I shall be glad to see you towards evening, if you feel inclined to come."

She smiled to herself as she read over the last sentence. She was half ashamed of it. Inclined to come? Of course he would be inclined to come. It was just because she knew he would be so much inclined, so irrepressibly anxious to come, that she had told him she would be out in the morning. She would go up to see old Josiah Thorne.

She looked up as she signed her name, and saw Jael at the front door, knocking.

Telling her to take a seat, Miss Lynn folded and addressed her letter, and went out to see if there were any child about who could carry it to the Brewery.

Perhaps it would have been wiser if she had given it to a grown-up person; for her scholars could read writing, and many adults in Shelbourne could not. But Miss Lynn cared little for what people said, when there was nothing to be ashamed of. And, after all, to-morrow all Shelbourne would know she was going to marry Aaron Falk.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

COUNTING THE COST.

MISS LYNN was ashamed of herself next morning when she found herself hurrying out after breakfast, instead of staying at home in a state of happy expectancy.

She had not yet told her mother that her answer had been given. If she had, Mrs. Lynn would have loudly protested against the unfeeling conduct of her daughter to her betrothed. Mr. Falk told to *wait till the evening* to come to the school-house, after Daphne had accepted him! Such a thing would have shocked Mrs. Lynn's sense of propriety in a degree not easily to be described. She had thought her daughter a little too independent in her behavior to her rich wooer all along. This would have been the final piece of imprudence, in her anxious eyes.

So Daphne kept her mother in ignorance of her happy decision till Mr. Falk's visit became dangerously near.

She was glad to escape into the fresh air that

morning, and to take the well-known walk across the fields to the Thornes' cottage. Carefully she surveyed the prospect as she went, for she did not want to come on Mr. Falk again among his sheep. She could not disguise from herself the fact that she knew him too little not to dread their first meeting under these altered circumstances. Cool and composed as a kind host and neighbor, she had liked him; as a lover, she had felt less at her ease with him; as her future husband, she could hardly as yet tell what her feelings towards him might be. And the unknown has always something of the fearful about it. It was so to Miss Lynn, though she wondered at and was a little perplexed by her own misgivings.

But no Mr. Falk started up in the meadows or leapt forth from behind the elm-trees, only his cows looked up lazily at Daphne as she passed.

At the top of the meadow, where all Shelbourne, on the one hand, and the top of the Thornes' cottage and Hepreth in the distance on the other, could be seen, she turned and stood still, looking back at the village. There stood the brewery, large and prosperous; Mr. Falk's stables, where the Virginian creeper grew; the brewery-house itself, a snug nest among evergreens and elm-trees, its pretty gables covered with creepers, the thin

blue smoke rising from its kitchen chimney. The garden, bright as butterflies' wings, lying in the sun, the velvet lawn on the left sweeping to the road below. A figure was moving about in the garden. Daphne strained her eyes to see if it were her betrothed. But no, it was a man in his shirt sleeves, trimming the edges of the grass along the walks.

She could not help a flush of pleasure, knowing it would be all hers. The comfort, the ease, the pretty home-like house, above all the garden—it took her breath away to think of it. No more toiling over books and slates all day; freedom to do as she liked, and money to spend on what she liked. To have her mother with her, and to make her last days happy; and above all, to be a mother to the parish, like Mrs. Myse, wine to give to sick people, milk and dinners to little Lily, help of all sorts to Josiah Thorne and Jael; the tears came into her eyes thinking of it all. She felt she hardly deserved to be the possessor of so many things she cared for.

And then she blushed, thinking how she had come out that morning to escape meeting the man who was to give it all to her, the man she must promise to love, honor, and obey.

And so she would, she said to herself. She

would try to make him very happy ; she had made him happy indeed already, by giving him her promise. All the rest, all the right and natural feelings would come in time.

Josiah Thorne's eyes brightened as he turned his head on the pillow to welcome her.

"You been a long time a-comin' to see me," he said feebly. "I didn't think never to see 'e no more agin."

"Oh, don't say that!" said Daphne; "I hope you will see me many times yet."

And she thought that next time she came she might have a basket of fresh eggs, a bottle of port wine, and a bunch of grapes to bring with her.

The old man shook his head.

"I'm got i' the walley o' the shadow," he said—"i' the walley o' the shadow—but I'm not through't yet. I don't count to see another Michaelmas, I don't. Michaelmas he took our rent, did master; al'ays had the rent, I had; didn't have to ask for't twice, he didn't. Nice gen'leman he was, and a good master to me. Forty years I worked along o' him."

"Who was he?" asked the schoolmistress.

"Muster Falk, Muster Falk, who else?" said the old man impatiently. "Never were no other like him. I been in a deal o' parts, nine miles t'other

side o' Hebreth I been, and niver heerd tell o' another like him."

"Was he—was he Mr. Falk's father?" asked Miss Lynn, coloring a little.

"Muster Aaron we called him, i' my time. I hear tell as folks speaks well o' him; but my gal and he fell out, I count, and—"

"Hev yer piller moved, fader?" asked Jael, coming up to the bedside, and fidgeting with the pillows, unnecessarily, as Daphne thought.

But Miss Lynn's curiosity was aroused. She must hear all she could now about Aaron Falk, since she was trusting her happiness to him.

"What have you to do with him?" she asked, looking at Jael and the old man in turn.

"Nothin'!" said Jael, hastily. "He's our landlord, that's all. It's his house, this is, and it's his land as it stands on, though fader and gran'fader carried the stones here, and put 'em together."

"*His house?*" repeated Daphne, looking perplexed; "but I asked him once, and he said—." And then she stopped herself. If Aaron Falk had not told her the exact truth, or had not appeared to do so, she was the last person that must betray him.

Jael gave a hasty shrug.

"He *said* a deal, I warrant," she answered, sulkily as Daphne thought. "Sayin's easy."

Daphne felt a something between a short breath and a sigh rising, and stopped it.

"Let me read to you, Thorne," she said, and she took down the old dusty Bible.

She thought it would soothe her, as it always did, as she saw it soothed the old man who had got "into the valley."

But the Psalm she fell upon at hazard was in the key of her own thoughts:

"Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

"He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and *speaketh the truth in his heart.*"

It was a small matter—a very small matter—that Aaron Falk should have equivocated when she had asked him whether the miserable tumble-down cabin were his.

And yet the knowledge of it took the sweetness out of Miss Lynn's walk home.

Jael's sulky words might have been spite. But what was to explain the evasion from the truth, of which she herself was *certain*?

Suppose he were not utterly noble, then, after all? Suppose *there were*, after all, nobler men than he?

Her thoughts still came in the Bible language she had so lately used at Josiah Thorne's bedside.

As she went down the slope of the meadow, and looked again at the house that was to be her home, a voice seemed to say to her, "Turn away thine eyes from beholding vanity."

She did turn away her eyes, not because she could make answer to the voice that she knew it to be vanity: but because the sight of it did not make her as happy as it had made her before.

CHAPTER XLIX.

"THERE IS A TIDE IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN."

THE brewer did not feel quite happy about his reception that evening. Daphne was not exactly cold in her manner; indeed, under the circumstances, he felt it would have been hardly possible for her to be so; but he did not think she was quite as cordial as she ought to have been.

He was too much attached to her, however, and too happy in the promise she had given him, to think much of trifles. She was undemonstrative by nature, and he must not expect her to feel for him as he felt for her.

So he argued, until it chanced to slip out that she had been up to see the Thornes in the morning. After that, any coldness of manner or words, rather, any want of the natural warmth he had expected, assumed a more serious appearance in his eyes.

Daphne noticed that his countenance looked a shade less radiant, and with the faint suspicion of some injustice or hard dealing to Jael and her father in her mind, she was wide awake to everything that might throw a light upon the subject.

If there was any thing to be known discreditable to the man she was about to marry, she had better know it at once. If he were indeed a hard landlord, she must let him know now that she disapproved of him in that character.

Yet his very change of countenance at the mention of Jael's name made her afraid to try and find out the whole truth. She did not know him well enough to ask him why he had denied that the cottage was his. Indeed, the reason of that seemed plain enough: a lack of moral courage in a very small matter. She had complained that the cottage was miserably out of repair, and he had shuffled, and said it was not "exactly his." Yet Jael said he was her landlord.

Daphne, who would forgive enormities in Eliza-Ann, and pity the erring and the malicious all round her with a divine pity, was yet inexorable in her demands upon the man that was to be her husband. Him she *must* look up to, and honor; there was no alternative she felt, but that of contempt.

And yet she tried to shake all doubts of Aaron from her. She heard him call her "Daphne" for the first time with no other feeling than a little surprise. She gave him a flower when he went away, feeling she ought to make amends to him, and sent him off happy. She reproached herself when he

had gone, thinking how good and kind he had been, how dutiful to her mother; and wondered at her own perversity. She had told him she could not marry yet; that she must consult Mr. May and Mrs. Myse first; that time must be given them to find a new schoolmistress. And to this resolve she remained firm. Two or three months' time she must have.

And yet Aaron Falk went home in a glory of sunlight, loving so much himself, that he thought he was loved more.

And after this things went smoothly on. The school opened again, till a new mistress could be found; and the brewer came every evening to tea, or to walk with Miss Lynn. All the village knew they were to be married before long, and all the village was pleased, with very few exceptions.

Mrs. Bellar was one. "Hartful 'ussy," she said, shaking her head and the mane upon it, that would have been tawny but for frequent applications of "Family Hair-grease," "Hartful 'ussy! she set her cap at 'im all along, from the very first. *She* won't go dry for want o' asking drink. Stuck up *she'll* be when she gits in that there house, suvvents and all, and things she aint never so much as seen through a bermometer. Pity her suvvents I do, if she treats 'em as she did my poor gal; nothin'

but a bag o' bones she were when she took her by her poor shoulders and knocked her out o' the house. I daresay she thought I'd come a-scramblin' and a-beggin' and a-prayin' on my knees for her to take her back—as if *I'd* go to 'umble myself so to *any* lady, let alone *her*. Eliza-Ann, my dear, come here, that's a darlin'. Ah you Billy there—you sinner, you young varmint, wait you till I bring the stick about your bones, and make 'em rattle!"

Andrew kept silence, because he saw there was little use in speaking, and believed that to speak would be to ruin Jael, who, though inadvertently, had been the cause of his finding out the black secret at last. But he changed his work, and his employer, and walked three miles out of Shelbourne every day, that he might avoid coming upon Aaron Falk. He loathed him so that he would have gone farther than that to escape a meeting with him. If he met him, he could not tell what the consequences might be. He never spoke of him to Jonathan; but they both knew, like their neighbors, that Miss Lynn was going to marry the brewer. Sometimes the two young men would see them walking through the fields in the September evenings; and both, with one consent, would change their course, to avoid them.

"It seems we've got nothing to do with folks

that are happy, you and I, 'Drew," said Jonathan once, when they had thus avoided the lovers ; " our lives don't seem to fall that way."

His voice had a half defiant half miserable tone.

" No, nor yet with folks that are bad, I hope," his mate answered, in a tone more defiant, if less miserable.

But Jonathan was happier about his friend, at least. Andrew was less fierce against Aaron Falk than Jonathan feared he might have been. And as for 'Scilla, Jonathan took great comfort in the fact that 'Drew had almost ceased to speak of her. The wound had left its scar, but it was surely fast healing.

So things went on, Daphne being drawn nearer to Aaron Falk by much intercourse, and by the force of his unwearying devotion: Andrew and Jonathan being drifted away by the tide of fate from all that had once seemed dearest to them ; and still, as men do, living and working on.

It was late in September, and the wedding had been fixed for the middle of October, before anything of importance happened in Shelbourne to disturb the even monotony of its days.

Mr. Falk calling one morning with a message for Miss Lynn, and a hope of seeing her before school hours, was told by her mother that she was not at

home; that she had been called to the Thornes' cottage the evening before, and had no doubt spent the night there. A laborer had come to say that, passing by the end of the lane, he had seen a red handkerchief tied to a stick out of one of the windows. Thinking something was amiss, he went to the door. Jael had opened it for him, telling him the old man, her father, was at the point of death; but she could not leave him to look for help, and that it was by the mercy of God that he had noticed the signal of distress, and come to her.

"And it's you as she'd like to see, Missus," said the man to Miss Lynn; "she thinks the old man 'ud like to see you afore he goes."

Daphne did not need to be asked twice; but, carrying a bottle with some brandy in it under her shawl, she went as fast as her feet could carry her through the darkness, across the meadows and up the lane.

Jael burst into tears when she saw her.

"Oh, the Lord's pitiful and of great mercy, after all. I'm not afeard for to be alone with him when he goes; but I thought there weren't no one to speak a good word for him to the Lord, nor yet to say no good words to him hisself as 'ud cheer him up. And I couldn't send for the minister; maybe

he'd come, but it 'ud likely be the dea'h on 'im, comin' out o' nights."

"I'm very glad you sent for me," said Daphne. "I can't often be of use. I shall stay with you through the night."

She took off her shawl and bonnet, and put some brandy in a cup, the only one that was not broken. Then the two women went up the ladder together.

"He is very ill," said the schoolmistress, leaning over him, and watching the snatched, short breathing, "but it is not death, Jael,—not at present."

"Do you think there'd be time, then?" asked Jael, eagerly. "I'd like send for my gal, if there'd be time. She'd fret, maybe, if she didn't see him afore he goed."

"Could we send her a message?" asked Daphne.

"Jonathan 'ud take it, that he would, if he knowed I war in trouble," she answered. "We'd best wait to daylight, and then I'll get him to go."

"I will go and see him, or get some one else," said Daphne, "as soon as it is at all light. And then your girl could be here early in the forenoon."

She made Jael lie down upon her bed, while she sat by the old man's side. Jael, who was weary, slept heavily. Miss Lynn kept awake, and as soon as the first pink stole into the sky, she put on her bonnet, and slipped out of the house,

CHAPTER L.

J A E L ' S M E S S A G E .

IT was a relief to her to pass from the stillness and gloom of the poor garret, where the shadow of death seemed already to be brooding, in to the freshness of the early September morning.

All the lane, as she went down it, was glistening with dew-drops, the grass and ferns were spanned over by myriads of gauzy spider-webs; the few birds of autumn were gabbling and chirping over their breakfast; and slowly the sun was riding up the heavens, and sending a glow and a glory over the stubble in the reaped fields.

It seemed to Daphne that she was the only living thing that had not rested. Even the ferns, late as it was in their little lives, had shaken the dust off their fronds, and bathed themselves in sun and dew, and were standing up fresh and feathery in the hedge-rows.

And she was chilly and tired. Her head and limbs were aching. She thought it was from want of sleep and the anxiety of watching. But, after all, the old man had given her little cause either to

keep awake or to be anxious. He had slept all through the night, after she had arranged his pillows and raised his head ; only his short fitful breathing and a thick husky cough showed it was more the sleep of exhaustion than of rest.

But her mind had been busy all through the night. She had made many plans as she sat by the old man's side, looking for the morning. Jael should not lack a friend when the old man was taken ; it would be in her power now to befriend her, and Aaron would befriend her. All the people spoke of him as good and kind to the poor.

The cock on the church spire was all a-blaze, as Daphne passed out of the damp grass in the meadow on to the village road.

The village itself was alive now with the tramp of laborers' feet, the opening and shutting of the doors as they came out, and the whistle of the younger men, on whom life's burden sat lightly.

Andrew Male stood in his doorway pulling on his coat ; Martha, neat as if it were midday, was putting some bread and cheese into his wallet ; other wives and mothers with their hair awry in nets, or tucked up hastily with a hair-pin, were beating mats against the garden railings, or pulling their sleepy boys out of bed.

Many stopped open-mouthed to see the school-

mistress going past at that early hour, and making for Jonathan Cleare's house.

Mrs. Cleare was arranging her cap at the window up-stairs, when Miss Lynn knocked at the door. The sound did not reach her dull ears, and it was a heavy footstep from behind the house that came at the summons.

Jonathan, in a coarse linen jacket, as clean as his mother's apron, and with a trowel in his hand, smeared with mortar, came round the corner.

Daphne Lynn, as she came through the village, and up the little garden, had felt, she could not tell why, a little fear of meeting Jonathan. She knew it must be all fancy, and yet she could not help fancying that of late, when he had met her, he had tried to avoid her. Had she ever shown him that she liked and respected him? She colored at the very thought, but her conscience acquitted her. It had never been her misfortune to care for those who did not value her friendship; she had never been more than friendly, to use the strongest word, to Jonathan Cleare.

And as she stood at the door and heard his footsteps coming round the corner; she drew herself up, and said to herself that as the promised wife of Aaron Falk she need feel no false modesty with other men. Of late she had not been to see

Mr. Cleare ; but now it was well she should make friends with all the village people ; it might be in her power to do them all in turn some service.

"I came with a message from Jael Thorne," she said to Jonathan ; "the old man is very ill, and Jael is very anxious to see her daughter ; I think her name is Priscilla, and she is in the workhouse ; do you know her ?"

"Yes, I know her," said Jonathan, "and I suppose Jael wants her to come out ?"

"Yes ; she said you would go for her, if you knew she was in trouble. But you are busy, I see." And she looked at his dusty hand, and the trowel.

His sore heart, taking all things amiss, read her look as one of contempt, or at least of condescension.

"I'm always busy," he answered curtly ; "some must work if the world's to go on ; and I was not one that was born with a silver spoon, as some folks are."

His tone more than his words hurt Miss Lynn.

"You speak as if I despised work," she answered, coloring. "I that have worked all my life, till now. I despise those who cannot work, and I do not know why you misunderstand me."

She looked up at him, and meeting his clear grey eyes, looked down again. She would not part with

him so. If there was any man in the village she respected more than another, it was this man ; and she had enough vanity to be pained and indignant at his wilful desire to quarrel with her.

Bodily fatigue had made her weak, as it makes most women. The tears started to her eyes against her will ; they sometimes did so when her mother spoke sharply to her.

And she knew that Jonathan was standing there, watching her face.

She dared not look up again, for fear he should see these meaningless tears, which, in his unkind frame of mind, he might interpret to mean anything. She spoke with her head down.

"Can you go, or shall I look for some one else to send to Hephreth?"

"I'll go," said Jonathan, in a subdued voice ; "tell Jael I'll go myself."

"Thank you," said Miss Lynn, "she seemed to wish you should go yourself to break the news to Priscilla. Good morning."

She turned and went quickly out of the garden. Jonathan stood still, watching her, not moving to open the gate.

When his little mother came down, five minutes after, he was still standing there, twisting the trowel in his hands.

"Your breakfast's ready, Jonathan," said her gentle quavering voice, at the door; "I've got a bit o' fresh fish for you, to morning; it tastes beautiful, it does."

He threw off his white coat, and changed it for a better, washed his hands at the pump in the garden, and drank off his cup of tea; and then, without stopping to taste the fish, he cut off a piece of bread from the loaf, and was off to Hepreth.

'Scilla was a strange girl, and would not come at everyone's bidding. He and Jael knew that, and that was why she was so anxious that he should fetch her.

"I don't never feel hungry of a mornin', I don't; I'm a bad mornin' woman," said Mrs. Cleare, "but I don't like to see Jonathan go out fastin'. His father, he took his victuals well, when he were a young man, same's Jonathan."

"Well, it ain't done *him* not much good, not to speak of," said Martha Male; "my way is to let the men take or not take, as their nature is. Nothin' don't do you good as your stomach's set against. It's a waste o' good cooking and good victuals; and it's my thinkin' that more men die of too much drink than die of too much fastin'."

By eight o'clock there was no change in the old man's state, and Miss Lynn went home, promising

Jael to return in the evening, or earlier if she was sent for.

"I'd take it kind if you'd come again," said Jael, sitting up wearily in her bed; "there ain't no one to speak a word for him to the Lord, not if he goes in the night-time. Minister, he'll be sure to come in the day: I wouldn't have him do no other."

Daphne Lynn went back, very weary, to her day's teaching. As she put on her bonnet again that evening, to start for the Thornes' cottage, she looked forward with more than usual satisfaction to the time—a little more than a fortnight hence—when she should be her own mistress, and the drudgery of school-work would be over.

She promised her mother not to stay with Jael all night, unless she found that she had no choice but to remain. Indeed, she felt little equal to another night without sleep in the hard chair by Josiah's bed.

Mr. Falk, who had come late in the afternoon to see her, had been very much opposed to her leaving home again. It was not her place to nurse Josiah Thorne, he said. He would willingly pay a suitable person to wait upon him.

"You are very kind," Daphne had said, with quiet decision, "but it's not quite a matter of money. He fancies that he likes to have me there;

and I know I like going. I shall not stay later than nine, unless Jael is afraid to be left alone, because my mother wants me to come back."

"I should wish you to come back, too," said Mr. Falk. There was an assumption of something like authority in his tone that startled Miss Lynn.

"I am sorry if you disapprove, but I feel I should be wrong if I did not go." Then, thinking she had spoken hastily, that she was not quite dutiful to him, she added more gently, "It is so seldom I can be of use to anyone, Aaron."

He relented as she looked wistfully at him. He thought it was the softest, kindest expression that had ever lighted up her face when she was alone with him. He had seen the look before; but it was given to her mother, or to some of the little children in the school.

"I know you will always do right. God bless you, Daphne," he said, as they parted. When she had gone a few steps up the field, for he walked with her to the gate leading into it, he followed her, and, taking both her hands in his, he looked into her face.

"I want to thank you for looking at me as you did just now. It is the first time, dear, that you have looked at me as if you trusted me. You

don't know what you are to me, Daphne. I don't suppose you ever will know."

"Why not?" she said, looking up surprised. Her head had been turned away from him.

"I don't know why I said that. I hope you will know later, when you are my wife. Perhaps you will get to care about me a little more then."

"I am afraid I have been undutiful to you," she said, "or you would not say all this."

"Perhaps I have said too much," he answered; "but I care for you so much, that I have a horrible dread sometimes that you may cease to like me—to—. But it is a very little time that I have to wait now. I won't keep you longer, it looks like rain."

He held both her hands still in his own. Now he stooped and kissed her forehead.

"Good night, Aaron," she said gently, and turned away. He stood by the gate, watching her, till she was out of sight.

She was touched by his tenderness. She looked back, and waved her hand to him.

And after she was gone he still stood there, watching the path she had taken.

CHAPTER LI.

THE BREAK OF DAY

"I THOUGHT you'd come," said Jael's voice wearily, from the garret, before Miss Lynn had begun to climb the ladder. "The day's been terrible long without you. Fader he's been a-frettin' for ye wonderful."

"How is he? And has your daughter come?" asked the schoolmistress, untying her bonnet and sitting down by the old man, where Jael had given up her seat.

Jael shook her head.

"Jonathan's been arter her, but the child's aillin' and she couldn't come. She'll come to-morrow, early, maybe, if the doctor 'ud let the child out;—she thinks a deal more o' that than o' her grand-fader."

Daphne looked at the old man, and then at Jael, who read her look.

"She'll be too late. He's a-goin' fast. Doctor come to-mornin'. He said he might last till evenin', or till break o' day, but he couldn't no longer."

Miss Lynn saw that the doctor must be right.

The short breathing of the morning had become quicker, and more uncertain. As night came on, there was a painful rattle in the throat as well.

"That's death," said Jael, as she sat at the foot of her own bed, her face covered with her hands. She had become a fatalist now, as most of us perhaps become, when death or sorrow meets us face to face in the pathway, and we see there is no turning back. She had given up using the stimulants the doctor had ordered.

"Not always," said Daphne. "But I do not think he can last very long."

He was almost unable to swallow now, though he still spoke a word or two, with long pauses between. He said Jael's name often, 'Scilla's once. But he had no cares to disturb his peace.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," read Daphne, "I will fear no evil."

His eyes brightened then for the last time. He tried to turn his head upon the pillow. The words were familiar to him, and he smiled.

When the psalm was finished, he nodded his head in pleased content, and closed his eyes. Daphne thought it was one of the most beautiful sights she had ever seen. The smooth bald head, the prominent but finely shaped nose, the refined, sweet mouth, and the child-like blue eyes looking out

above the thin wrinkled cheeks, on which the work of ninety years had left its traces. The ineffable peace, and freedom from all fear of death, in strange contrast with the poverty of the poor garret, and the gloom of the gathering night outside the rattling window,—there was something wonderful and moving in it all; and Daphne, watching the old man by the light of the candle, that threw its dim rays far enough to show Jael still sitting at the foot of her bed and rocking herself gently to and fro,—forgot that she was weary, and that this was the beginning of another sleepless night.

Pattering against the crazy window came the rain that Aaron Falk had foreseen. Now and then sheet lightning divided the sky, and sent a pale glamour over the elm, and the tops of the orchard-trees. There were awful silences, as before a storm; and then the wind rose and soughed dreamily, and rose again, and battled in the branches; and the wet leaves on the nearest boughs beat against the window-panes, and made weird noises, like the crying of an infant in the dark.

After a while, Daphne changed her seat, and took her place by Jael's side.

"Can't you sleep a little, Jael? I would wake you at the slightest change. I am going to stay here.

It is too wet to go home, if I wished it; and, in any case, I should stay to-night."

"It's too late for ye to go home," Jael answered, rousing herself for a minute, and comforted that she could not lose her friend. "It must be nigh on midnight," she added, looking out at the window, where a black line marking the horizon was all that could be seen through the sparkle of the rain-drops and the shivering of the wet leaves.

Miss Lynn looked at her watch, and found Jael was right. She had learnt from the face of nature to guess at times and seasons better than those who could read and write. She had not had a clock for many a long year, and yet she knew the hour for supper and for bed as well as the birds in the copses.

She sat down by Daphne, who covered her shoulders with a shawl, for she was shivering. It was useless to ask her to sleep, now that she knew her father's time must be so short. She was more faithful to her post than they whom the Saviour asked to watch by Him. Sorrow that made them heavy, had made her wide awake.

"It won't be long before I go arter him," she said, breaking the silence suddenly.

"Jael, for Priscilla's sake you shouldn't wish that."

"'Scilla? what can I do for her? I ain't fit to work no more. There's on'y the work' us afore her—on'y that."

"Don't say so," said Daphne earnestly, laying her hand on Jael's, which was very cold. They were talking in hushed voices, not because they could disturb Josiah Thorne, who was past that, but because it was the chamber of death. "Don't say so, Jael! 'Scilla shall not stay in the workhouse. I can prevent it now—I shall be able—"

Jael only shook her head again: A bitter smile, that Miss Lynn did not see, was on her face.

"Don't shake your head," Daphne went on eagerly. "If anything happens to you, I will take care of Priscilla. You know, Jael," she added, "things are going to change with me now. Priscilla can come and be my servant. Mr. Falk—"

Jael lifted up her face and looked at Daphne with a pitying, and yet half-scornful expression, quite new to her. Before Miss Lynn had time to try and interpret it, Jael broke out,

"Poor dear, little you know what you're sayin' of! The thin' you're speakin' of can't never be. And don't speak of it to *him*—for the love o' the Almighty don't name it to *him*! I wants to die i' the old house like fader. I don't want to go i' the workus for the little while I've got left—"

Miss Lynn's disturbed, anxious face brought Jael to herself.

"I'm light-headed," she said, "trouble's made me light-headed. Couldn't you rest, my poor dear, on my bed?"

Daphne had stood up. Some impulse made her feel she must leave Jael's side; some vague notion that this would ease the pain Jael had inflicted. What could it mean? What did it all mean?

She walked across the room in a dreamy state, and was about to sink into the chair by the old man, when the candle flaming up suddenly, showed her that the face she had left on the pillow had changed its look.

"Death," said Daphne to herself, though she had not seen that look more than once or twice before.

And it was death. A little before the dawning, just at the time he always fancied he heard the master's voice calling him, the Great Master had called Josiah Thorne, and this time he had answered to the call.

Jael rose, like King David when his child was dead. She folded away her grief, and thought no longer of herself.

"Go away you," she said to Daphne, "you ain't used to such things. No one shan't touch fader

but me. I've always done by him sin' ever mother went, and I'll do for him now."

Daphne went to the window, and looked out into the night. When she left it a few moments after, the last service had been rendered to Josiah Thorne, and he lay sleeping under a snow-white sheet.

Jael pointed to it.

"I've had that by me this many a month," she said. "I wouldn't never use it, so as he'd have it clean against he went."

She took some sprigs of rosemary and lavender from a drawer, and laid them on it.

"And now you'll sleep," she said, "for you've done all for him as you could. It was his time to go, and he's went. The Lord 'll not find nought amiss with him; he al'ays loved the Lord, and keepled his goin's straight. On'y—I'd have praised Him if so be He'd let my gal seen him afore he went."

She was pointing to her own bed while she spoke.

"I am not tired," said Daphne, wearily enough, "you must sleep there, Jael."

"I? I'm goin' to keep along o' him. I ain't agoin' to leave him now, till they've put him away."

She laid herself down on the bed where her dead father lay sleeping, reverently, as if she feared to disturb his rest.

Daphne tried to sit up for a little while; she

felt as if she could not sleep in that strange scene, on Jael's wretched bed.

But this very scene, and the death of the old man, had served to drive from her mind the thoughts that troubled her. All seemed nothing in the immediate presence of the angel of death.

And she was young, and her strength was overtaxed.

After a little she threw her shawl over the pallet bed, and stretched herself upon it.

For a moment she heard Jael's regular breathing, and knew she slept.

Then everything faded from her, and she, too, was sleeping.

Outside the wind was moaning like a lost soul, and the rain was pattering. Within lay the old man, motionless, under the white sheet, with the rosemary on his breast.

CHAPTER LII.

DAPHNE'S AWAKING.

WHEN Daphne opened her eyes the bright September sun was streaming into the room. The rain-drops had dried away from the window, and the leaves of the elm-tree ; the wind had gone down, and everything was changed : she must have slept late, she said, raising herself from the hard bed which sheer weariness had made soft enough for a deep long sleep.

The first sight of the grey shawl under her head recalled the scene of the past night. The second thing on which her eyes fell was the smooth white sheet stretched over what had, a few hours before, been Josiah Thorne.

It was all true, then ; and yet, how like the truth was to a dream. The wretched room, the poor bed on which she found herself, the dead man lying before her—surely it was a dream. A fortnight hence she was to be the rich brewer's wife, a great lady in the parish ; Daphne hardly knew whether that or this was the most unreal.

At first her bewilderment was too great for fear.

But as she came to herself, and saw that Jael was gone, that the dead man alone kept her company, a feeling of awe stole over her. She rose, and casting a hasty glance at the awfully still outline of the figure on the bed, she gathered up her shawl, and began to descend the ladder hastily.

She must be sleeping still, or her eyes were strangely dim and heavy: for that was not Jael whom she saw before her.

It was some one with the look of Jael, but with beauty that Jael had never had. Tall, fair, with wide, child-like blue eyes, a slim, straight figure, and something that is indescribable of beauty and grace in all her movements and gestures; this was the woman that Daphne saw.

And this must be Jael's child, Priscilla.

Daphne, who had paused in wonder on the ladder, came down slowly. Jael was not in the room. The door was open, and the cool morning air was blowing in. A little breakfast was prepared on the table with more care than was common in the poor home.

Priscilla was standing near the doorway, the sun falling on her dark blue workhouse dress and on her fair hair; she was looking down at a little child, who, with his back to the ladder and Miss Lynn, was crawling upon the floor, and clinging to

his mother's skirt, making soft, babyish gurglings and cooings.

"You are Priscilla?" said Miss Lynn; "I am glad you have come, for your mother's sake, though you are too late to see your grandfather."

"Yes, I know," said the girl, shuddering.

"Is this your poor—your little child?" asked the schoolmistress, gently, a touch of infinite sadness and pity in her voice. So beautiful and so young, what pity could be enough for her?

Priscilla looked pleased at its being noticed. She stooped, and raised the child in her arms. It, too, was in its blue workhouse dress; and as she raised it, meaning to show its face to the stranger, and the child, in a baby ecstasy of love and play, turned its cheek instead on to its mother's shoulder, and clung about her neck, it seemed to Daphne that they were two beautiful flowers growing upon the same stem.

And these were paupers, said Daphne; could God have punishment great enough for him who had brought them to this? It should not be so any longer; at any price, Priscilla must be saved from the degradation and danger of a workhouse life.

"Priscilla," she said, coming nearer her, "it must not be as it is now, any longer; the workhouse is not a fit place for you; you would like to come

away from it, from the bad people you have to live with, wouldn't you? you would like to come and be"—she hesitated as she looked at the beautiful face—could this girl ever be a servant?—"You would be my servant and my friend, wouldn't you, if it can be managed?"

Priscilla looked a little troubled; she pressed her cheek nearer to the child's head upon her shoulder.

"You need not have to part with the poor little child altogether," said Miss Lynn. "Your mother would keep that, and you could see it sometimes, you know."

"The school-house isn't far," said Scilla, looking happier, but still doubtful.

"It would not be at the school-house," said Miss Lynn; "I am going to be married; the Brewery House is going to be my home; we can't afford to keep a servant just now, but then—"

Jael had come in, with a bundle of sticks in her hand. She was looking at Daphne as she spoke. Scilla was looking at her mother, her lips parted, and her cheeks paled. The little child had turned his head, and he, too, was looking, with round watery eyes, at the speaker.

Was it something she read in any of these faces that stopped the words on Daphne Lynn's lips? Was it the remembrance of Jael's words of last

night, with their awful solemnity of utterance —“The thing you’re speaking of can never be”?

Daphne did not know; only she knew that at that moment a sudden light came to her, a light to light up darkness and sin. It was the rent in the heavens in the blackness of the still thunder-storm; the flash that brings not daylight, but fire and sword.

She staggered to the doorway, and pushing past Jael, ran down the green lane as if she were pursued.

Heaven and earth were reeling before her; whether she stumbled and fell, seemed to matter nothing to her.

And yet, through the dumb horror and despair that had seized her, and made her careless of all else, she was conscious of one overmastering fear—the dread of meeting Aaron Falk.

CHAPTER LIII.

TROUBLE AND TOIL.

THE children had already gathered in the playground when Miss Lynn hurried through it to her home.

She had not forgotten them, nor that she had the daily routine of teaching before her. The force of habit is strong; and in her miserable agitation she had yet thought of looking at the church clock as she passed, and had been relieved to find it was not quite nine. She could have a few moments to think, and to control herself, before she went among them.

Her first impulse was to run up stairs, and lock herself into her own room. But she remembered her mother, who had been left all night—not alone, it is true, for Martha Male had consented to come and sleep in the house on condition that she should go home at six to prepare Abraham and Andrew's breakfast.

But the mother would be alone now, and she was never very happy without Daphne. So the daughter went straight to her room.

Never before had she been thankful that her mother was blind.

Now, as she caught a sight of her own face in the glass, she could not but be thankful. She felt that in the last hour her face had aged sensibly. She never had much color: now, though she had walked so rapidly, she was as white as marble. Her mind still full of the dead face she had seen, she started, seeing how like her own was to it. Was she going to die? Did people die of trouble such as hers?

She almost hoped so, till the blind woman turned her sightless eyes at her with that mixture of helplessness and vacancy that only blind eyes wear. Then Daphne knew she must live: that there was something to live for.

Everything was passing from her but this: this only death could take from her.

She sat down by the bedside, and laid her cheek against her mother's.

She had meant to be brave, and to hide her misery for a while, till she could express it better. What was this weakness coming over her?

She raised her head, and began to unfasten her shawl, and fold it up.

She had not spoken yet. Her mother thought it was that the old man was dead.

Daphne had not seen many deaths. It was enough to disturb a stronger woman than her.

The mother, who was peevish enough when her child was well and in prosperity, began now to soothe her in her turn.

"I see he is gone, my dear. Well, he was very old, you know. The young may go, but the old must, as the saying is. He was quite ready, I hope. I'm sure you've been a comfort to them. But you're terribly tired. Give me your hand. How cold it is—is it so cold this morning? And it's not as steady as usual. You're quite over-tired, Daphne, my dear. I can't let you do this again. What will Mr. Falk say, if he sees you like this?"

Daphne pushed her hand away, and rose from her seat. She walked up and down the room meaninglessly, once or twice, hardly knowing what she was doing. Her mother thought she was beginning to put the room in order.

"My dear, Martha's put me straight, and given me a cup of tea. Get your breakfast, and don't stand about longer. Did you sleep at all? If not, you are not fit to go to the school. You see, my dear," and her voice began to have some of its natural petulance, "these good deeds you take on yourself make you quite unfit for your proper duties. You can't keep the school to-day. But, after all, it doesn't much matter; it'll have so soon to break

up. I told Mr. May you must have ten days or so before your marriage, to get your things ready, and that."

Daphne had thought about her "things," like other women. There were half finished things lying about her now. She turned from them with a sharp pain, only to meet the stab of her mother's words.

"I will get you your breakfast, mother," she said, glad of the opportunity of getting away. "And I *am* going to have the school to-day. I slept a good deal last night."

Mrs. Lynn had her breakfast brought to her. But Daphne went fasting into the school.

"School-missus do look bad," said the elder girls to each other, and to their mothers, when they went home at night.

"She's ta'en the old gen'leman's death wonderful to heart, I take it. And yet it's on'y what's right and natural, poor dear. It isn't many as carries their years so well as Josiah's done."

"I wonder as Muster Falk's willin' for her to be gaddin' about and nursin' of sick folk. She do look a bit delicate."

"Muster Falk? maybe he ain't willin'," said one of the men, with a laugh. "But she's got the rein-hand of him, I count. He's wonderful taken up

with her, they tell me. He'll cut every blessed flower as ever grewed in that there glass-house of his, and give 'em away to her. She's born to luck, she is, and looks like it."

"Don't look like it to-day," said another man. "I happened on her to-mornin' early as she were comin' down the street: and white as a church-yard ghost she was. Didn't like the thoughts of stoppin' along o' the corpse, I reckon. And no blame to her neither."

"She'll be set up very like when she's a fine lady; but she's a nice one now, anyway. A beautiful letter she can make out, and no mistake. And a good turn she'll do for the worst of us."

"It's a bad thing when a woman gets the bit between her teeth," said an older man, shaking his head. "But if there's any as I'd give her head to and trust her to go the right way, it's that young woman."

"I believe the blessin' of the Almighty's on her," said Mrs. Cleare to Jonathan. "And He'll direct her ways for her; I don't feel no fears o' that."

Meantime the longest day of the school-mistress's life passed by. One only consolation she had to keep her up; it was, the knowledge that Aaron Falk was out for the day, that he did not expect to be home till evening.

If there had been the chance of his coming to see her at the dinner-hour, or after the school closed, she felt she could not have stood up teaching; trying, and wonderfully succeeding, in teaching as if nothing were amiss.

In our sorest straits the knowledge that we have *time* is very supporting; though after that time is over, nothing can come but the blow we are avoiding now.

Daphne's endurance was strained to the last point; she felt that a meeting with Aaron Falk that day, and the scene that must follow upon it, would be more than either mind or body could stand.

"Please 'm, are we to come again to-morrow?" asked the children, when lessons were over. "Mrs. Myse told us as you wouldn't want to be troubled with us no longer; she said there wouldn't be no more school."

"Come again as usual," said Miss Lynn, "I will speak to Mrs. Myse."

"Don't stop to put away anything!" she said, quickly. She felt as if the jar of another slate must make her cry.

They went out, wondering; such an order had never been given before.

Perhaps they would have wondered less if they

could have seen her after they were gone, when, locking the school door, she sank down on her knees before one of the desks, and hid her face in her hands.

CHAPTER LIV.

MR. MAY'S MANDATE.

"SHE'S not at home? Well, it does not matter. You will do quite as well, Mrs. Lynn, though I am very sorry not to see her dear face. But I came to say we can't *hear* of her carrying on the school any longer. We think it only fair to Mr. Falk, you know, and to all the people, and indeed to Mr. May and myself, who expect to see her looking,—not *nice*, because she always does *that*,—but particularly sweet and pretty on the great day, that she should have ten days to prepare. And poor Mr. Falk, you know, he complains to Alfred that he *never* has time to see her. He is quite *aggrieved*, you know, and seems to think it is dear *Alfred's* fault. So, for our sakes, if not for her own, and for the sake of the wedding gown, you know, the school must be closed to-morrow. It is Mr. May's *particular* wish and order you may say to her, Mrs. Lynn. *How* is the good little woman?"

"She's not well to-day, ma'am. I think she's over tired. She's wanting in judgment about some things, though I can't find much fault with her.

And she would have it she must stay with Jael Thorne because the old man was dying."

"Ah, yes; but *how* grateful Jael is to her! I've just been up there, and she is longing to see her again. The poor child, Priscilla, has come home, but she's of little use to her."

"Still it's company for the poor woman, isn't it, ma'am? Daphne needn't be thinking she's left alone."

"No, no. Set her mind at rest on *that*, if she doesn't know Priscilla is there. Did she mention to you that she had come?"

"No, ma'am, she didn't. But she's so very tired to-day. She's spoken little and eaten less. She went out for a little turn half-an-hour ago. She said her head ached."

"Well, remember, it's *settled* that the school does not open to-morrow," said Mrs. Myse, assuming a look of strong-mindedness and decision.

She was slipping on her goloshes at the door over her flat little cloth boots. She always made a point of taking them off as she entered a house, and putting them on as she left it, if there was the slightest chance of their being damp.

"You see I have to be so careful with dear Alfred," she said. "If I were to come in with anything damp on, he would begin sneezing directly."

I believe that, humanly speaking, goloshes have saved my life and his."

"Well, I'm sure we hope you'll always wear goloshes, ma'am," said Mrs. Lynn, with solicitude. "Shelbourne would not get on well without you and Mr. May."

"You are *very* kind to say so. But that reminds me," she answered, laying her hand kindly on the blind woman's arm, "that Alfred and I take *great* comfort, thinking that if we go we shall not leave Shelbourne *quite* to strangers. Your dear daughter and Mr. Falk will be father and mother to our parish, I know."

"Daphne will always try to do her duty in whatever place she's called to, ma'am. I believe that."

"I believe it, too, and so does Alfred. It makes us both *very* happy that Mr. Falk is so blessed. He has been something between a brother and a son to us since we came to Shelbourne. The only thing I long for now is to see him happy. He is *most* patient, but I think he feels this long waiting very much. I never saw greater devotion than his, Mrs. Lynn."

Mrs. Myse looked into the forge as she passed.

"I hear you've been arranging things for poor Jael, Jonathan. I hardly liked to ask when the funeral is to be, she is in such a state of dull grief."

"I saw her this forenoon, ma'am. My mother went to see if she could do anything for her, and she said she'd like me to call. If it's the same to Mr. May she'd let it be the day after to-morrow. It's soon, but it'll be best for her when he's taken away. He'll be put in the coffin to-morrow morning. The men will be there by eight o'clock with it, and I'll go up and give them a hand. She'd like it better than having only strangers."

"I am glad she will let it be soon. But I was afraid she would not be willing: the people mostly have such a feeling against a speedy burial. I think the sooner the *better*, Jonathan, when once God has taken us to rest."

"She's so ailing," he answered, "she made no words about it. She didn't seem to care one way or another. So I named the day."

As Jonathan closed the shop door that night he saw Miss Lynn going in at the school gate alone.

Andrew, who was waiting for him to come to supper—for the evenings were too short and chilly now, on the verge of October, for evening walks—said as he watched her,

"She's alone to-night. He's gone out for the day, I count. A pity as he can't stop away altogether. It would be a good thing for more than one in Shelbourne."

Jonathan made no answer. He never did answer now, when 'Drew spoke of Miss Lynn. To listen was hard enough work for him, without speaking.

"I can't do nothing for Jael, I suppose?" Andrew asked, turning the subject. "I sent up word when your mother went, as she was to let me know if I could do anything; but she said you'd promised to see after things for her."

"Yes, I'm going up to-morrow morning. He's to be buried the day after. You'd best not help carry him, 'Drew. I'll get bearers. You aren't strong enough to play tricks with yourself, and it would very like upset you."

"I'd do it if Jael had set her mind on it," said Andrew. "But you know why I'd as lief not go up there that day. I hear as *she'd* be there, from Hepreth: she's safe to come and see the last of the old gen'leman. And I don't feel as I could meet her, not like that, before folk."

"You're right," said Jonathan. "But I think all the same you ought to be schooling yourself to face it now. You'll need to meet 'Scilla some day, 'Drew, sooner or later. You ought to be a man, and make up your mind to it, now you've put the thoughts of her out of your mind, like. There's nothing for you to fear in meeting her. It's another that ought to fear."

Andrew was pulling a straw to pieces. He made no answer. He never could argue with Jonathan, least of all now.

"Maybe she's been already," he said after awhile, when Jonathan's thoughts had travelled far away from 'Scilla. "I feel somehow as if she'd been about the place, though I never set eyes on her."

"She's there now," said Jonathan, "but she won't stay long, only to keep her mother company to-night."

"To-night? She'll be terribly afeard then. She couldn't never bear to see any one as was sick, let alone a corpse." He was beginning to look restless and troubled.

"She needn't to be afraid with her mother," said Jonathan, a little indignantly. He was thinking of another woman who Jael had told him had stayed with her through the night, and had slept like a child in the same room with the dead Josiah. And well she might. God and His angels would look after her.

A light shone far into the night from Daphne Lynn's window, but no one noticed it except Jonathan.

He thought she was sitting up to finish her wedding-dress, perhaps : to make the little preparations that he had heard his mother say every happy woman would take a pride in.

He opened the door at twelve o'clock, and saw the light still burning through the limes in the playground. She was *very* happy: time was flying quickly with her, sure enough.

How could he guess the real truth, or know what it was that kept Daphne Lynn with her head upon her mother's shoulder so far into the night?

Fool that he was, he said to himself, to watch that light, that meant darkness, if anything, for him.

CHAPTER LV.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

MISS LYNN slept badly enough. Such sleep as she had was disturbed by miserable dreams, from which she awoke starting, to a reality no less miserable.

The knowledge that daylight will bring the possibility of something we dread is enough to make sound sleep impossible for most of us. At daybreak Daphne awoke, and could not rest again. She had not only the suffering of the day before to go through, after the short respite of unconsciousness; but she awoke to know that by this time Aaron Falk was as wretched as herself.

She had written to him the evening before, and in her walk she had left her letter at his house. She tried now to remember the words she had used and could not; she only knew that a dread and horror of him had seized her, and that under that dread and horror she had written.

He would find the letter when he came home at night. Now the morning had come, and she

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might have to face him before an hour or two had passed. The meeting at any time would be a terrible one; unnerved as she was now by physical fatigue, and unstrung by all she had gone through during the last few days, the thought of it was intolerable. She could not comfort him; she could give him no hope; it would be for them both, misery heaped on misery.

There was one way out of it. She could leave the house and escape from him. She rose hastily, dressed herself, and by seven o'clock was downstairs. It was still hardly light. She looked to see that all the blinds were down, and that her mother was sleeping. Then she went noiselessly out of the door, closing it behind her. She looked back, and was satisfied to see that the house looked, and would look for two hours to come, as silent as sleep itself. No visitor could try to gain admittance there. And Mrs. Lynn, who always slept late, and was used to being left much alone, would not attempt to break the spell.

Miss Lynn paused at the gate. Where could she go? The morning air was pleasant to her; she could have gone into the fields or woods at any other time than this, as she had often done on bright happy summer mornings. But Aaron Falk knew she sometimes walked there, and she might

meet him. She must go somewhere where she could be safe from him.

Yesterday she had felt that to return to the Thornes' cottage was impossible. There the blow had fallen upon her; there there could be no comfort, only in every look, on every face, a confirmation of her fears.

Jael would be alone no longer, she had argued to herself; there could be no reason for her to go.

Now, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, she turned to the place from which she had fled. Driven between two fears, the fear of being compelled to meet Aaron Falk, and the pain of going again through the sufferings of yesterday, it seemed to her the last was the least evil of the two.

The terrible truth she had faced already; him she need not face.

Nay, now that she had accepted the truth in all its bitterness, she was conscious of a half-frenzied wish that it should be confirmed. The miserable alternations of her mind were unendurable. One moment she said to herself it *could* not be, she could not have been so deceived in him. The next moment, a rush of memories overwhelmed her, and she could as little doubt that it was all too true. One moment she asked herself if she had wronged him, if it was all a terrible dream? The next, she fled on

faster towards Jael's home, all to escape from a terrible reality.

And Jael would need her now, she said to herself, trying to drown her own troubles in the thought of another's. She might be of some comfort, at that sad time when strange hands took away her dead out of her sight.

She walked slower and tried to calm herself. The half hour struck from the church clock as she put her finger on the latch of the poor door.

It opened. Perhaps Jael had gone out. She turned to the orchard, but there was no movement there. The house, too, was silent.

Jael must be sleeping, then, and Priscilla, and the child.

Daphne's first thought was to let her sleep on. She must be so tired after long nights of watching and grief.

The next was to remember that before long the old man must be laid in his coffin. It would be better for Jael to awake now, than to come to herself only to find her need to watch was over, and the time for the last look come.

"Jael!" said Daphne, softly, at the bottom of the ladder. Perhaps she need not face them all, after all; Jael was such a light sleeper, she would hear her call.

"Jael!" she said, the second time, less softly.

There was no sound, though she strained her ear to catch it. Not even a movement from Priscilla or the child.

If *they* were sleeping soundly, she could go up and wake Jael, without awaking them.

She began climbing the ladder carefully, groping her way for a safe footing on the dark landing.

"Jael!" she said again, in the doorway, pausing as she looked into the room.

Jael's bed was empty.

Daphne gave a deep sigh of relief, seeing it.

Then she felt a chill steal over her. For there lay Jael sleeping beside the dead man; all night she must have been alone with *that*.

There was something thrilling and awful in the silence in the little garret; in Jael's motionless child-like sleep beside the shrouded figure.

How brave she was, said Daphne, coming nearer to her; what a brave, true soul.

"Jael!" she said, the fourth time; and as she said it, and there came no answer, she stretched out her hand to touch the sleeper's shoulder.

One touch, and Daphne withdrew her hand, while the chill that had stolen over her by reason of the silence, seemed to spread over her whole frame, and freeze her blood.

This was not sleep : or if it be sleep, it is so different from that "taking of rest in sleep" that we know nightly, that we have called it by another name.

Jael Thorne was dead.

The short, turbulent day of life was over ; and her rest had begun.

Her work, too, was over : she lived to keep the last watch beside him, dead, whom, living, she had so long watched over. Now strangers must take him, and what had she to do ?

What but follow him, and follow closely.

He had entered the great door which opens so often to let men in, but never to send men out again.

There is one key to that door, and only one. God offered it to Jael Thorne, and she saw that the name of it was death.

And she stretched out her hand, and said "Amen, Lord !" And so the door opened.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE LANE THAT HAD A TURNING.

DAPHNE LYNN never knew how it was that she got out of the room, and down the ladder, without falling.

She had felt ill in the morning when she started. This last shock seemed to rob her of all her remaining strength. She found herself, dizzy and faint, in the green lane, trying to make her way back to the village.

After a few steps, a blackness came over her sight. She tried to get to a gate near her; but the darkness thickened, and the gate vanished from her. She tried no longer to save herself, but fell heavily to the ground.

It is one of the many merciful provisions for our feeble human nature, that, when suffering, either of body or mind, reaches its highest point, then blessed unconsciousness overtakes us. There is a truce from pain, before we are called upon again to take up our burden. Pain's very intensity brings its own relief.

How long Miss Lynn might have lain there it is difficult to say, for it was a lonely place—the loneliest in Shelbourne.

But, this morning, the men who were carrying Josiah Thorne's coffin came up the lane, and with them came Jonathan. He was walking with them, for he had a way of making friends with men of all trades, and picking up what he could from them. Perhaps that was the secret of his being able to turn his hand to most things.

But the two men in front were the first to catch sight of a woman's figure stretched upon the ground.

"It must be Jael," said Jonathan, remembering her seizure the day of the school-feast in Mr. May's field.

He ran forward. The first glance showed him it was not Jael.

Daphne's straw hat had fallen from her head and lay beside her. She lay with her face beneath the hedge, where the moss sloped up to it. It was the most death-like face Jonathan had ever seen in a living being. Was she living? He could hardly think so—so deathly cold her hands were, and her lips so livid.

Jonathan's mother had given him a little brandy in a small medicine-bottle.

"Jael 'll want something, poor soul," she had said,

as she slipped it into his pocket, "and she's not like to have nothin' by her; not so much as a dust o' tea."

He forced open the closed lips, and, raising her head on his knee, he poured it down her throat.

"She's so deadly cold," he said to the men, who had laid down the coffin, and were standing staring, and doing nothing. "Take that on to the house, will you, and get a blanket or a shawl."

"Here's this," said one of the men, throwing something at Jonathan's feet, as he turned away.

It was the parish pall: a rusty, thin, black velvet pall, with a wide white border.

Jonathan put out his hand to take it.

"Not that, for the love of God," he said, under his breath; and he pushed it from him with his foot, while he took his own coat off, and wrapped it round her.

Still there was no movement in the head resting upon Jonathan's knee.

Perhaps she was really dead. It seemed so long since he had found her! and how long before he had found her might she not have been lying there?

Till now he had quite forgotten himself. In the wish to save a life he had almost forgotten whose life he wished to save.

Now that the thought came to him that the life

was passed beyond his power to recall it, he knew it was Daphne Lynn that lay dead at his feet.

And the first feeling was one—not of sick despair, but—of a strange triumph. Living, she was dead to him; now, she was his for one short moment. Aaron Falk had not found her, and tried to save her. God had taken her from them both, but to him, Jonathan, it had been given to know it first, to hold her while her spirit passed away into God's presence.

He laid her down upon the grass again, his coat folded round her. And now he knelt beside her and said words to her that he had never said to Daphne living.

Every now and then he chafed her white hands as a last hope. But then he laid them down again, reverently on her breast. She had never meant that hand to be his; it seemed to him a mean thing to take advantage of her now; only, he said, she could not hear him.

"You thought he loved you, and he must love you. God made you so that we must all love you. But his love was never like mine—he never could have made you as happy as I could. I'm poor and he's rich; I was below you, and he was above you; but I know you couldn't be happy with him, that's why God has taken you; I thought, somehow, it could

never be—I thought it never could be right that the Almighty should let it be.”

There was a slight movement, first in the hands, then the lips parted ; at last, the eyes opened.

Jonathan had risen to his feet and was standing a little on one side. It would be a shock to her to come to herself and find him so close to her ; his face would not be the face she would look for and hope to find.

Ah, yes ! it was a shock, even now, and Daphne was straining her eyes to see him. Consciousness was only slowly coming to her. She had a perplexed wistful look on her face, she wanted to see clearly, and could not.

Catching sight at last of the outline of a man's figure, she gave a cry. It seemed to Jonathan to be a cry of terror.

It gave him a sharp pain at his heart. He knew she would not care to see him ; but he had not thought that the sight of him would have been terrible to her. What had he done to deserve this ?

At any rate she was frightened, and he must try to soothe her.

“Don't be afraid,” he said, coming forward, and looking into her still half-vacant eyes. “It's only Jonathan the blacksmith. I found you fainting, and I tried to bring you to.”

The eyes were not vacant any longer ; they were turned upon Jonathan. The knitted brows relaxed ; even a smile came to Miss Lynn's lips.

" Oh ! " she said, drawing a deep breath, " it's you ; I didn't think of that ; I thought—I was afraid—"

She stopped, and tried to raise herself.

" If you'd not mind taking my arm," said Jonathan, " I could help you to Jael's house. It's close by ; I suppose you were going there ? "

Miss Lynn was looking round, bewildered, as if the lane and hedges and the clear sky could help her to remember where she was, and what had happened.

At the mention of Jael's name she remembered everything.

" Not going," she said, " I was coming back. I went up to see her, and she was—oh, Jonathan, she was dead ! "

She burst into a flood of tears ; Jonathan's arm shook under her hand.

He had never heard his name from her lips before. Trouble had broken down the barrier between them.

They walked on in silence a little, towards the cottage. Then Miss Lynn said—

" You must wonder at me for being so weak as to cry like this. I wonder at myself, because I know

we must all die ; I do not think death is so very awful. But I was not well when I came out ; I felt very ill and tired. I've had trouble of my own, and Jael's came at the same time as mine ; and then, finding her dead—it seemed the last straw, and I couldn't bear it any longer.”

Jonathan did not answer. He was wondering what her trouble could be. All the people thought she had no trouble, that all things prospered with her. He had thought so too.

“ Our lots lie far apart,” he said, after a while. “ It isn't likely I can help you in anything ; but if I can, you know you've only to ask me. After this next ten days, I don't say I can, because if you're above me now, you'll be higher above me then, and what's more—”

“ Don't speak of that !” she cried, stopping his words ; “ that is never to be.”

Jonathan was thunder-struck. Had Aaron Falk given her up ? Was it possible ?

There was such infinite distress in her eyes, that he asked, in spite of himself, and with a touch of satire he was hardly conscious of—

“ Is that your trouble—that it's never to be ?”

“ It's trouble every way,” she answered, “ but that it should ever be, now, would be the worst trouble of all.”

They had come to the door of the cottage. Miss Lynn shivered as she saw that they had done so.

"That house!" Jonathan heard her say to herself under her breath.

"Don't come in again," he said, "there's no call for you to come in." His voice was trembling. He pointed to a broken stump by the wall, where she could rest, and ran into the house to get away from his own tumultuous thoughts.

Had the sin found out Aaron Falk, after all? Was God going to do justly, by man's ideas of justice?

"We couldn't get no blanket," said one of the men coming to meet him. "There's nothing in the house but the clothes they lies in. I suppose the woman, she's asleep."

Jonathan went up to the garret. Perhaps Daphne had been mistaken.

But Daphne had been right.

Before another night another coffin came up the green lane; and one grave received Jael and Josiah.

CHAPTER LVII.

A CUP OF BITTERNESS.

AARON FALK had come home very late, after his long day of business.

It was eleven o'clock as he drove through the village, past the school-house gate. Too late to go and see Daphne that night ; the only light that burnt was from her bedroom window.

But he was in a happy state of mind for all that ; happiness was so near to him now, it colored his life already with its rosy glow.

Good wishes and congratulations had met him on all sides during the day. Many of his friends had heard of Miss Lynn, of her beautiful voice, when she led the choir, of the change in Shelbourne since she had come there. They did not fail to tell him so, and hearing it all made him proud as well as happy. He loved Daphne so well that the opinion of others would never have turned him from his choice ; but that his choice should be approved, was very pleasant to him. He shrank from public censure, and valued highly, if he did not court, public praise.

As he pulled off his great coat inside his own door, he felt in the pocket for a little parcel he had brought with him.

The lights were burning in the dining-room, where Sarah had prepared his supper. She had lighted a fire because it was a chilly evening, and the warmth and brightness were in tune with his happy thoughts.

He went up to the table, undoing the silver paper round his little parcel.

First, a something flat and small. He laid it down very carefully on the table, then opened the paper and its contents. It was a wedding ring, small and bright, that lay shining under the lamp-light.

He lifted up the little paper by the corners, as carefully as he had laid it down, and looked at it closely. A quiet smile came over his face. The pinched, calculating, hard look was gone; love and happiness had worked wonders there.

Then he laid the paper and the ring down again, and opened a tiny box. He took out of it a locket which he held up by the ring to the lamp-light. He was not used to handling such things, and he touched it gingerly, as if it would break. There was a lock of dark hair in the locket, when he opened it. He looked at the hair a moment, as if the thought that that should be in a locket that Daphne was to wear pleased him greatly.

When he heard Sarah's step, he closed it with a click, and took both ring and locket to the mantel-piece, where she could not see them. Two letters were lying on it; one was unstamped, and the writing was Daphne Lynn's.

Why did she write, when she could send for him? Why had he not stopped to see if she wanted anything, as he passed the gate? It was an unusual thing for her to write to him. Perhaps Mrs. Lynn was ill; perhaps—he fancied the writing was hardly so firm as usual—perhaps Daphne herself was ill.

He opened the envelope hastily.

Sarah had left the room, shutting the door behind her.

There was perfect stillness while he read. Only the newly-lit fire crackled cheerfully at his feet.

And he made no movement. He read to the end, folded the letter, put it back in the envelope, and laid it down before him.

But the thin face he raised to the ceiling was blanched to a strong whiteness. The fresh night-wind had sent him in with a ruddy color in his cheeks. Now the ghost of the man that had entered the room a few moments before stood in his place.

Sarah's step was at the doorway once more.

He turned away to the fire again, and took up the paper.

"You can go to bed," he said, "I want nothing more to-night."

He sat down, and began mechanically carving the cold mutton on the table.

But he stopped after the first slice had been cut, and laid down the knife and fork on either side.

He put his hand up over his eyes, leaning his elbow on the table.

So he remained, far on into the night—that night that seemed to be ruled over by the evil influence of some star that sat high in the windy September sky, and looked down on Shelbourne.

He had been stunned at first by the awful suddenness of the blow. Even thought was impossible.

Now, as he sat on, and the hours clanged out in the silence from the steeple, he came to himself; and asked himself what he should do?

Do: what was there to do? Doing was of as little avail as thinking. Once before, in a terrible trouble, he had roused himself to act, and he had acted.

But what had the act done for him? It had averted the blow that had fallen at last.

If it had taken place then, it would have been less hard a blow. Then he had never known or loved a Daphne. The respect of his neighbors had been hard to lose: what was it to lose this woman's

love, after he had earned it—just as the cup of happiness was at his lips?

What could he do? With her nothing could be done: that was all over. Fear of him, suspicion of him, he might have overcome; but she had learnt a terrible truth: it was the strength of that, that stunned him. With her there could be no buying over—no deceiving. She was true, and he loved her—there could be no crooked dealings with her.

He did not wonder *how* the truth had come to her: how, after all, the sin had found him out. That it had come to her—that he had lost her, and through his own sin—that was the sting of his sorrow.

Through Jonathan, or through Jael, what did it matter, so long as he had lost her? How could it signify by whose hand he had fallen, so long as he *had* fallen in her sight? Now that she had passed away from him, and he knew that they were as irrevocably parted as if death divided them—nay, perhaps much more—the beauty and innocence of her character stood out more clearly before him. In proportion as he had fallen low before her, so she towered above him. They could have nothing in common. She could have no pity for him: repentance could be but an idle word in her ears: for how could repentance undo the past, and make him the man she had believed in?

With her nothing could be done, and little said. His shame would have driven him away without seeing her, and so he could have spared her pain.

But his love for her, and the self-respect that still remained to him, told him he must see her once again.

To part with her with no parting was impossible. Her forgiveness he must gain, if he could: for he knew by the letter before him what she had suffered—what he had caused her to suffer.

He rose from his untasted supper, and took the little box in his hands. Then he pushed open the window, and walked down the green slope of his garden to the pond below.

There was a little splash, not enough to startle the swan asleep on the water, with his head under his wing. One or two small circles, that the moon lighted up as a cloud passed by her.

Aaron Falk came back. The little plain gold ring lay still upon the mantelpiece in its silver-paper.

He had measured her finger for it. It only went upon the tip of his own. There was nothing that savored of him in it, as there had been in the locket. He could not throw it away yet. That might come, by-and-bye—but not yet.

He folded it up, took it upstairs with him, and laid it in his desk.

The pale new moon looked down on Aaron Falk as he laid it by—his little dream of love over.

And upon Jael Thorne, who had no other watcher, as she lay down that night for the last time in the garret, and sighed her soul away.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE GATES OF DEATH.

WHEN Jonathan came out of the Thornes' cottage, Miss Lynn had gone.

He saw the men out of the house, and, locking the door, put the key in his pocket. There was no need for watchers any longer there.

The men, who had come from a neighboring village, left him at the foot of the lane.

He turned into the meadow to make his way homewards, and on the top he paused and looked round, thinking he might catch sight of Daphne's figure going down the slope.

"She isn't fit to go home alone," he said to himself. "She might have waited."

He had been looking on at some distance, while she was close to him. She was sitting with her back against one of the large elms that crowned the slope, resting her head against it. She got up when Jonathan came in sight.

"I'm glad you waited," he said, coming up to her. "You aren't fit to walk alone."

"I thought I was," she answered, "I felt better when I started, and I thought I should like to get home. But I'd better tell you the truth. I was afraid to go through the field alone, and I waited for you."

Jonathan thought he understood what she meant—that she feared meeting Falk—but he said nothing. It would be better to let her speak on. It was not for him to intrude on her trouble.

They walked on without speaking for a little. Then Daphne said suddenly, as if she were forcing the words to come,

"I have been thinking since I sat here what I must do. And it has come to me that I had better speak to you. I believe I can trust you better than most people here, and I think you are better able to answer me than some. Will you tell me the whole truth if I ask you?"

"I never can tell you anything but the truth," he answered. "But it's not in a man's power always to tell the whole truth. Some things a man must keep unsaid, all his life through."

She saw no hidden meaning in his words and went on, speaking with agitation,

"I shall know by your face whether it is true—whether you know more than I do. I don't think you can look a lie, far less say one. You know that

I was going to be married, and I've told you to-day it can never be. I've told him so, and I have given him up. And, oh, it's a hard thing to ask a stranger—but if you were my brother or my father, would you say I was right? You knew the Thornes well—do you know their history better than the other village people? Did Jael's words mean what I took them to mean? If you had a sister, would you like her to marry *him*?"

She was looking earnestly into his face for the answer.

Jonathan turned to her and said, as earnestly,

"If I had a sister, God knows I couldn't be more glad to save her from him than to hear that He's put out His hand and saved you."

The tears rushed into Daphne's eyes. They had stopped, and were looking at each other.

"And no one told me? I knew I had few friends," she said, "since my father died. But I did not think I had no friend. It's not a world where women can live alone, and trust to those who know more of this terrible world and its sins, to keep them out of misery. But what could I expect, in a strange, strange place, where no one cares for us?"

Jonathan had turned his shoulder to her. He was looking away over the fields and past the village. For a moment he was choked, and could not speak.

Daphne's sad face and hard saying had moved him almost beyond the power of self-control.

After a few moments he turned, and said, in a voice that silenced her, she knew not why—

"It's not as you think. It's as far from it as night and day. I can't tell you now why I've kept silence. Perhaps, some day my tongue may be loosed. But it's a hard tongue to loose at all times, and of late there's been nothing to say, that could be said. Only it isn't that you've got no friend in Shelbourne—for the love of God don't say that again."

They did not speak till they reached the school-gate.

"Mr. Cleare," said Daphne, then, "there is only one thing I want to ask you—are you the only man who knows what I know? or does all the world speak evil of him?"

Jonathan looked at her for the first time in his life with suspicion. Did public opinion weigh then so much with her? Would she determine her choice by the fact of whether Falk was, in the eyes of others, innocent or guilty?

He meant that his answer should test her. With a certain bitterness, he said—

"Only one man in Shelbourne knows it besides me. He won't speak if it's of service to you that he should keep silence. He's been silent for the

sake of Jael, who'd have lost her home if he'd spoken. We're broken in to it now, and if *you* want the man to be screened—it can be just as it has been—all just as it has been.”

“I *do* want him to be screened,” she answered. “He has trouble enough without bringing shame on him, from which he can be saved. Let it be between us three and my mother for ever. It's the only thing I can do for him, now that all is over between us.”

“The other man has a greater temptation to speak than I have now,” said Jonathan, “whatever it may have been till to-day. But he's my mate, and I think I can rule him, since he's ruled himself so well till now.”

Daphne held out her hand to Jonathan and turned away. She knew he must be speaking of Andrew Male. But what use to ask further questions? The one she had asked was answered. The promise she had wished for was given.

She blessed Jonathan in her heart for this. And the first words she said to her mother were not of her own weakness, or the shock she had met with in finding Jael dead; but—

“It need not be known, mother. No one need know the reason that it is all over.”

“My dear,” said the mother, “it would be better

surely that they should know. What will they think of you for breaking it off, if you can't give a reason? They'll say you've jilted him, that's all."

"What *can* it matter?" she answered, bursting into an hysterical fit of crying. "I want to get to bed—help me, mother, to get to bed."

At seven o'clock next morning, when Jonathan was at his bricks and mortar, building the little room on to his house which was his wont now in his spare hours, he heard the sound of quick wheels up the road.

He and a neighbor from the next house looked out at the same time.

"It's the doctor," said the neighbor. "I take it the schoolmissus is ill. She did look bad yesterday and the day before."

Daphne was indeed ill. She had passed away again into the land of unconsciousness, in which Jonathan had found her the day before.

When Aaron Falk came to see her the first time he was told that she was ill. The second time he came Mrs. Lynn had the doctor's orders to admit no one.

"If I could see her—even see her," he said, "for the last time. I should never trouble her or you again, if I could see her once."

"Does she know any one?" Mrs. Lynn asked of

Mrs. Cleare, who had come in till a nurse could be sent for.

Mrs. Cleare shook her head.

"You can come, then, and look into the room," said Mrs. Lynn. All her peevishness was gone. She was calm and ready for all emergencies, now that real trouble had overtaken her.

Aaron Falk followed her upstairs. The window in Daphne's room was open. The muslin blind was softly blowing out and in on the wind. A bunch of late roses that he had sent her, stood in a glass on the table, hanging their heavy heads over her Bible and her work.

Mrs. Lynn held the door open, and he took one look. Daphne's grey eyes were fixed vacantly on the ceiling, and her hands were thrown out over the pillow.

Aaron Falk turned quickly away.

He went downstairs and out of the house, leaving the blind woman before she had time to say the words of forgiveness that rose to her lips.

* * * * *

There was no change in Miss Lynn's condition for many days. After that she grew worse. And no nurse, such as Mrs. Lynn could afford to pay for, was to be found.

"Mother, couldn't you say you'd go on doing for

her?" said Jonathan, one day. "Surely you'd do better for her than a stranger; I'd see after father if you'd go."

"Jonathan, he's al'ays so thoughtful," said Mrs. Cleare to Daphne's mother. "He says as I can stop and do for her if you're willin', ma'am. He's ta'en it wonderful to heart that she's so bad. He's like his father some ways, is Jonathan. He don't say much, but he'll go out over the door if anythin' upsets him like. He went out to-mornin' soon's ever he heard as she were worse, and then he come and begged me to do for her. 'Mother,' says he, 'you can do better for her,' says he, 'than a stranger.'"

Mrs. Lynn was quite of Jonathan's opinion. She could do little herself because of her blindness. But Daphne was a very quiet sufferer, and gave little or no trouble; and she seemed to be as patient as a lamb in Mrs. Cleare's hands.

"Whether she lives, or whether she dies, she's ready to go," said Jonathan's mother, one evening when she returned home to get her men's supper ready, before going back for the night to the school-house.

"Do she look like sinkin'?" asked Jonathan the elder, wakened to an unusual interest in other people's concerns.

"No one can't tell yet," said his wife; "but this

is the worst day as she's had all along. She's so roamin', and don't get no sleep. The doctor said he'd come ag'in to-night and pass his opinion on her. He said he'd see to-night which way it 'ud turn. Jonathan, you ain't eatin' no victuals; can't you so much as take your beer?"

CHAPTER LIX.

SILVER LININGS.

NO one but Andrew guessed at the reason why Priscilla had left her mother and gone back to Hephreth.

And he guessed rightly.

The sight of her grandfather in death had awed and frightened her; the thought of a night spent in the same room and house with that still figure terrified her.

Towards evening, though it was damp and chilly, and the child ailing, her fear overmastered her, and she fled back to the workhouse.

"Why did you come back so soon?" asked one of the women, as she came in wet and tired. "If I'd the chance of gettin' home, or a home to go to, I wouldn't hurry to get back in this hole agin."

"I thought as something 'ud come to the child if I stopped along o' that," said 'Scilla; "gran'father were dead. They're goin' to put him away to-morrow. I couldn't stop there." And she shivered.

"Somethin' more like to come to the child through

bringin' him home this damp night and him ailin'," said the nurse, taking the little thing out of 'Scilla's arms, and feeling its cold hands and feet, almost as blue as the frock it was dressed in.

Priscilla looked up frightened into the nurse's face.

"You don't think nothin' 'll come to him, do you?" she asked, tremulously.

"It's not your fault if it don't. But there, there, now—don't be a silly and cry about it. Cryin' never mended broken bones as the sayin' is. Get some hot water, and we'll bathe him. Bring it to my ward, there's a fire there."

They were standing in a bare room, where four or five other women with babies in their arms were sitting on a bench against the wall. The only relief in the expanse of deal and whitewash was a placard, addressed in large black letters to "Refractory Paupers," which hung upon the wall.

'Scilla thankfully followed the nurse, a kind woman who had had children of her own, to the sick-ward, where flowers and a fire made the place a paradise in the poor girl's eyes.

"There, he's better for that; no doctor couldn't do no better for him," said one of the women who was sitting up in bed. The sight of 'Scilla's distress, and of the little child's face, made a grateful

source of excitement in the monotonous life of the workhouse invalids.

"He can't go with you to-night," said the nurse kindly, but with decision, "it's warmer in here than in your place."

She had noticed what Priscilla had not, that the little one's breathing was thick, and that there was a sound of croup.

Priscilla slunk off to bed with heavy steps and a woe-begone face. But she lay on the top of the brown coverlet without undressing, till the under-matron, coming round to see that all was right, discovered this enormity.

"Where are your clothes?" she asked roughly. "Lying down in your new dress? If you had to pay for it, you'd take better care. Get up directly, and go to bed in a proper way."

It was no use to explain why she had not undressed. The story of her child's illness would find no soft corner to touch in this woman's heart. Priscilla rose as she was told, and the matron stood beside her till her orders were obeyed.

"Don't put your clothes on the bed; you know very well that's against the rules. I shall have to complain of you to the master."

"It's so cold," said the girl, shivering, looking

wistfully at the dress which would have kept her feet warm if she had laid it on them.

"Cold? Don't talk to me about cold; a strong, healthy young woman like you ought never to be cold. How many blankets do you have at home, I wonder? It can't be much of a home, or you wouldn't have hurried back from it. You know well enough where to be comfortable, though you can whine like the rest of them when you're here."

The matron went out, locking the door behind her. But Priscilla lay awake. If the child were worse, the nurse would come to the door and tell her.

At six o'clock, when they all got up, the nurse had not been to the door. 'Scilla rose with a lighter heart, and dressed herself quickly.

The doors were open now; she looked out to see that the passage was clear, and then ran to the sick-ward.

"My dear," said the nurse, coming up to her, her polished red arms akimbo, "I weren't willin' to trouble you 'cause I knowed you couldn't come out to the mornin', but the child's very bad. You can look at it, but I don't think the Lord 'll spare it to you."

The girl gave a cry and ran across the ward to the bed where her child was lying. She saw death in its face, and with a moan she sank down on a

chair beside it, stretched her arms over its body, and put her forehead against its breast. She could not bear to see it die, and she knew that it was dying.

"Is there any one she knows," said the doctor, a few hours later, "if she has no relations? Some one ought to come who could do something with her."

The nurse shook her head.

"She never speaks of no one, except her mother, and there come a letter to-mornin' sayin' she were dead. I read her the letter, but she didn't make as if she heard it, she's that taken up with the child."

"Poor soul," said the doctor; "she's in great trouble. I'm half afraid for her reason if she's not roused. She ought to be taken out of here for a little to get this off her mind. She's not as wise as most people, I think?"

"Well, I dun' know about that, sir. She's wise enough and got heart enough about some things. Wonderful good mother she's been to that poor child; and as gentle as a lamb. No bad words like the other women."

"What's her name?" asked the doctor, laying his hand on the girl's head. "Priscilla, is it? Priscilla, look here, you must try and rouse yourself. This won't do; the little child is dead, but you've some other friends in the world, I daresay."

She looked up with a dull stare into his face and made no answer.

"Well, I can't wait. Only if you can find out that she has any friends, nurse, you must let them know. Let her sleep here to-night; it'll comfort her, though the child's dead. Remember, if there's any trouble made about it, it is my orders."

"Let me see," said the nurse, rubbing her forehead, a little later. "She comes from Shelbourne. There's a cart of the brewer's goes past to-day; it always goes o' Thursdays. I'll set one of the children to watch for it. It'll be a nice job for one of 'em, and pass the time; and they'll take a message to her friends, if she has any."

* * * * *

Towards evening a young man was standing at the door of the sick-ward.

"Here's a young man who is a friend of the girl Thorne," said the master, who had come to the door. "The doctor wished any one who came to see her to be admitted."

"Come in," said the nurse, kindly. "I'm sure we're glad to see any one as is a friend of hern. We've been all upset like, seein' the trouble she makes of losin' the poor child. Perhaps she'll rouse more if you'll speak to her."

The young man came stepping softly across the

room, as softly as he could in his thick nailed boots. He was in his working clothes, and there was a look of excitement, which he was trying to suppress, upon his sun-burnt face.

'Scilla was still lying with her face upon the dead child, her arms stretched over it.

"It can't be dead," said the young man, under his breath, looking at the nurse; "she never could abide to see sick folk, let alone a corpse."

"She can abide this," said the nurse; "it's her own child, you see; we can't get her to leave it. I wish we could."

"'Scilla," said the young man, coming close to her, "you ain't left quite alone; you've got a friend yet, 'Scilla. I've come a purpose, as soon's ever I heard the news, to see if I could help you."

She moved a little.

"You won't let me go back without speaking to me, will you, 'Scilla? You remember 'Drew, don't you, 'Scilla, as was always your friend?"

The nurse had turned away. Even the women in the beds had left off staring. Tears were in some of their eyes. Something in Andrew's manner made them feel that to look and listen would be an intrusion. This was no common meeting of two friends.

The girl lifted herself up now, and looked into Andrew's face.

"Give me your hand," he said, in a low voice.

She kept one on the dead child ; the other she gave to Andrew. Her eyes had gone back again to the little corpse.

"I knew you'd speak to me, 'Scilla. I comed away soon's ever I heard you was in trouble. I haven't been nigh you before because—well, for one thing, I thought you hadn't no need of me. But when I heard you'd lost that—I couldn't do other than come to you. You aren't angered because I've come, are you, 'Scilla?"

She looked at him, and the tears had come into her dry eyes. Her lips moved ; she was saying "No," very softly, so softly that no one but Andrew, who knew her ways so well, could have guessed at what she said.

"My dear," he said, bending over her, and closing his hands tightly over hers, "it breaks my heart to see you here ; it ain't no place for the like o' you. Do you think as you could come back with me, now as you've got nothin' to care for here ? You ain't got no mother, now, nor no home, 'Scilla."

She pointed to the dead child and whispered, shaking her head,

"I can't leave it."

"But that'll come home, too," he answered ;

"you'd like it to be laid under the old church, and not in the town?"

She nodded her assent, for her voice was choked with tears.

"Will you help her get ready?" said Andrew, turning to the nurse; "I think I'll get her to come home to my mother."

"That I will, and you'll deal fair by her? She ain't got no friends, young man."

"She's got friends, and a home, now," he answered. And the nurse looked in his face and took his word.

They walked home side by side, Andrew and Priscilla.

It was late on a bright October afternoon, when they started. The hedges were sparkling from the rain of the day before.

The nurse had lent 'Scilla a black shawl and bonnet. The little child was to follow next day, and to be laid to rest in Shelbourne church-yard. The thought of that seemed to comfort 'Scilla; and as she realised that it was indeed dead—that her mother had gone too, she turned to Andrew with a child-like dependence that she had never shown before.

They spoke very little the first part of the way, only sometimes when she looked tired he gave her

his hand. It was better to leave her with her grief a little, Andrew thought.

It was not till they reached the bay in the wood, where the hyacinths grew that they used to pick together, that he stopped and said—

“I want to speak to you now, ‘Scilla, my dear.”

“You aren’t going to send me home—not to *that* house?” she asked, in a frightened tone. Through the copse and up the hill was one of the ways she used to take in old days, to her home.

“Send you there? ‘Scilla, do you think that’s what I brought you for? Do you think the thought of you isn’t in my mind night and day? They think I’ve got by it, that I don’t care for you no more; but I’d best tell you the truth, though it may grieve you a bit; the only thing that stood between you and me, has been taken away to-day. It’s the Lord’s doings, ‘Scilla, that it’s taken; but where the Lord’s been hard to you, my darlin’, he’s been good to me. You didn’t want me, before; but may-be now you’ll want a friend; you’ll want some one to take care on you, ‘Scilla; you know you’re made beautiful above other women.”

She was hanging her head, but she made no answer. His voice was trembling as he went on—

“This is the place as we used to pick the blue flowers together. I looked in your face many times

then, and I said if you'd have me, you should be my wife. Then—you know what came atween us, my dear—and I thought I shouldn't never have a wife."

She was crying now, still looking down.

"Don't fret, 'Scilla, my sweetheart," he said, tenderly, "it's all past and gone, now. You've had your cup of troubles, and I've had mine. But I think He's showed us the way as we ought to go, now; it's the way my heart's been pointin' all along. Will you come home to mother, 'Scilla, and be my wife, and be always along of me?"

"O 'Drew," she said, sobbing, "you're too good to me; but your mother—she'll never speak to such as me."

"Give me a kiss, Scilla," he answered, "the Lord's made you mine again, and neither man nor woman shall come between us now."

CHAPTER LX.

THE LOVE THAT STOOPED.

NO one wondered when the next Sunday morning, Pedley, the clerk, heaved up the large book of Registers of Marriages, and put it before Mr. May. Every one knew what was coming.

“I publish the banns of marriage between Andrew Male, bachelor, and Priscilla Thorne, spinster, both of this parish. If any of you know just cause or impediment why these two persons should not be joined together in holy matrimony, ye are now to declare it. This is the first time of asking.”

Some of the people fancied Mr. May's voice shook a little as he spoke. Andrew had always been a favorite of his; he had felt deeply for him in his trouble. Now, alas, he had good cause for other feelings than sympathy with Andrew. Aaron Falk, the man he had always leaned upon, and taken counsel with, had fallen in his eyes. Village rumor began to whisper the truth. The curate, thinking to arm himself and defeat the foul calumny, had gone straight to his friend. And, broken by trouble, by the loss of Daphne's love, and by the news

that she was hanging between life and death, the better man in Aaron Falk had asserted itself, and he had opened the black page in his life to Alfred May.

"If I were you, I would go away for a time," the curate had said. "It would be best on all accounts, if you can leave home."

The brewer did not go at once. Some said he was too proud to be driven away. Others, that he cared more for his money than his good name. Even Mr. May judged hardly of him for staying on in Shelbourne at such a time. No one guessed that he stayed only till he could hear that Daphne's life was safe. While she lay at death's door he felt he was a murderer. He knew that Jael's death alone could never have brought her to this pass.

She did not die but live, and when he heard that she was out of danger, the brewer took Mr. May's advice and went away.

As Miss Lynn lay in the helpless but peaceful state of a slow recovery, she felt as if she had passed one long night of dreams, and had awoke to find years gone over her head.

There was no fear of poor Aaron Falk in his distress any longer. He had been gone a week before she could make up her mind to ask her mother about him.

"Mother," she said, when her question had been answered, "I think there is but one thing for us to do, and that is to leave this place as soon as I can get about again. I know people that have to work for their bread can't afford to go always by their feelings. But I don't think he can ever be happy while we are here. If we went away, it would all pass over, and be as if it had never been, I dare say. It is his home, and it's not ours. We were breaking up our home any how. It would be very easy for us to go."

"If you wish it, my dear, perhaps it may be," her mother answered, trying to quiet her for the present at all costs. "You can talk to the minister when you're better."

"There's another thing," said Daphne, "the school is closed all this time. I know Mr. May does not like to look for another mistress while things are as they are. He would think it was taking the bread out of our mouths. I wish you'd write and give it up for me, mother. I should feel much happier if you would."

"Should you, my dear? Well, then, I'm willing to try and go away. But it's a hard thing to move again at my age, Daphne."

"But you don't care to stop, do you, mother? There is no one cares for us here. Everything that

made Shelbourne a happy place to us is gone. I feel as if I must go away from it all, and forget all that has happened. I feel so old, mother, I feel as if years had passed since I lay down on this bed."

Mrs. Lynn went down to the kitchen to have her tea with Mrs. Cleare. She told her almost word for word what Daphne had said.

"I'll take her a cup o' tea," said Jonathan's mother, with the tears in her sweet grey eyes.

"My dear," she said, "your mother's been a-tellin' me as you've been sayin' you've got no friends—no one as cares whether you go or stay. And I take it hard as you'd go to think that, when so many's ta'en up about you. There's never a day but Jonathan's awaitin' in the door of an evenin', a purpose to hear if you're mendin'."

Daphne was looking in Mrs. Cleare's face when she began to speak. Before she ended she had turned her eyes away.

After a little she said, as Mrs. Cleare sat beside her,

"Andrew Male is his friend, isn't he?"

"Yes. He's his mate; they've been mates ever sin' they were lads together. They're wonderful after each other, is Jonathan and 'Drew."

"When did you say the marriage was to be?"

"Oh, 'Drew, he's to be married to-morrow. He

were asked the last time o' Sunday. It's put new life in Jonathan seein' his mate happy. He's been terrible cast down o' late, wi' one thing and another."

The next morning, at a little past eight o'clock, Jonathan and Andrew walked down to the church together.

Andrew's quiet face was lit up with a subdued happiness that his mate had missed for many a long day back.

No one else was at the church but Andrew's mother, who brought 'Scilla.

"Jonathan," said Andrew, as they came to the church-yard gate, "I never thought this day 'ud come arter all. But it's come, and mother's ta'en it a deal better than I thought—no one can't help to love 'Scilla as gets to know her. But I al'ays knowed the one of us went first to the church, to marryin' or to buryin', he wouldn't go alone. We've stuck together all along, and I hope nothin' won't ever come atween us."

"It's not very like, 'Drew," said Jonathan.

"I dun' know, lad, about that. Look here," and he stopped an instant, and took his mate by the arm, "there'll never be another day as happy as this in my life, till I see you and the girl you love standin' as me and my 'Scilla's goin' to do this mornin'."

"Don't wait for that day, 'Drew, it'll never come."

"It may or it mayn't," said 'Drew, knowing it was little use to argue with Jonathan. "But what I wanted to say is this. I'm afeard if ever the woman you love says she loves you, that day you'll have to give up your mate. Leastways it can't be as it was in old days—as it is now."

"What do you mean?" said Jonathan.

"I mean one as is as she is, won't look at 'Scilla. Women is terrible hard on each other, Jonathan. I've found that before now. And she'd have cause, I know, that—but for all that—"

"For all that—what, 'Drew?"

"I couldn't come nigh them as wouldn't speak to her. Not if it was your missus, Jonathan."

Just then they went in to the church, and there was no need to answer.

To hear Andrew speak, he might have seemed a proud man that day.

Yet at his wish, he married his wife in her black gown and bonnet. And no bells rang out a wedding peal from the steeple.

They walked home together, the little company of four. But Jonathan and Martha followed this time, and Andrew and 'Scilla went before.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE LOVE THAT SOARED.

"IT'S a hard thing to move again at my age, Daphne."

That was quite enough to rouse Miss Lynn from the depression which followed upon her illness, and to make her return to the old life, without further thought of change.

Her recovery was very slow, but the squire, at Mr. May's intercession, had her place filled for some weeks. The doctor had ordered change, but neither the weather nor the school-mistress's purse made it possible. In her own heart she longed to leave Shelbourne. It was full of sad associations; not only sad, she said, for sadness might be hallowed; but all her memories were bitter.

As soon as she was at all fit for it, she turned to her teaching as the least of two evils. The lack of her natural occupation gave her too much time for thought. She had gone again and again through that painful task of self-analysis, which to a tender conscience is nothing short of misery. At times her sorrow and horror of Aaron Falk's sin seemed

to fade before her distress at the remembrance of what she thought her own wilful self-deception.

For perhaps her keenest suffering now came from the knowledge that his loss was not a heart-breaking loss to her. She was aware of a feeling of relief when she awoke morning after morning to remember she was free.

And yet she had deceived herself into thinking she cared for him; or, not caring for him, she had promised to marry him, and so had deceived him, too. For what must any man think a promise such as she had given, if he did not take it to mean something like love?

And then, again, she lifted up her face and thanked God for saving her, all unworthy as she was, from herself, and from the rash and wicked step she had taken. He had taken her by a hard way, through deep waters; but it seemed to her that the blow He had dealt to her chains was the only blow that could have severed them and forced her into freedom.

In her work she found some relief; but she was a humbler woman than before. She felt she had conned a lesson of distrust in herself and her own motives that could never be unlearned.

And Jonathan? Jonathan watched her still from afar off. The barriers that stood between them

seemed to him still so great, that the dismissal of Aaron Falk lessened the distance very little. His moods changed, it is true. When she was at the point of death, only the dark figure of that destroyer was his rival. If she might only live, then all would be well.

But when the misery of suspense had passed, their paths sundered. He saw her the pale ghost of the Daphne he remembered, but with an inexpressible sweetness and sadness come into her face that awed him. He saw her clothed in a calm, dignified, sorrowful reserve, that seemed to bid him stand aloof from her. She was the schoolmistress again, well dressed, with gentle womanly manners, such as the people he lived amongst thought only fit for ladies. And he was the blacksmith, with an old father and mother to support, and only the trade of a little village to rely on. The people he lived amongst could not, he said, be those with whom she could be happy; though once with a bound his heart had leaped within him when he saw Daphne kiss his mother at the schoolhouse door.

So he let the weeks and months go by, and did not know whether he was happy or unhappy. Only a warmth came over him when he felt that neither death nor another man had taken her; that he still saw her pass the forge, still spoke to her sometimes, as strangers speak in passing; and many times a chill, when he re-

membered that something wider than the village road divided them, and that it did not lie with him to lessen the gulf. Then it was that he realised what he had given up when he came back to Shelbourne. If things could have gone on with him as they had begun, if he had come home and seen this face that he had got to love so well, he might have asked her to be his wife, and done her no dishonor. Nay, he would have taken her need to work from her, and she should have lived in plenty, such as she had never known.

So June came round again, and Daphne's roses were in bloom once more. She had tended them very carefully through the spring, and day by day they opened their glories to the sun, and to her face as she bent over them. She spent most of her spare time amongst them, but one evening she remembered some white orchises that she had seen growing in a copse by the side of the Hephreth Road, and she put on her hat and went out to look for them, leaving her mother knitting in the garden.

Aaron Falk had not come back. Rumor said he had gone a voyage to America, for his health; and he had a brother there, so rumor may have said true. But the meadow, and many of Daphne's old haunts, were closed to her, by the ghosts of memory.

The Hephreth road was almost strange to her, and the copses by the side had taken her fancy.

She had found her orchises, and was just coming out to the road again, when Jonathan Cleare came by ; he, too, was going homewards.

Daphne stood still at the gate leading out of the wood.

"Good evening," said Jonathan, stopping too.

"Good evening," said Daphne, a little color coming into her face.

The evening sun was slanting down through the limes on the other side of the road ; half her figure was in shadow, half lighted up by the glow. The tall white orchises were nodding in her hand ; her face had an expression of child-like content at having succeeded in her quest.

It reminded Jonathan of 'Scilla, as he had often seen her in that wood on summer evenings ; but oh, the difference between them ! In his eyes Daphne had all 'Scilla's beauty, with that mysterious something in her face besides, without which beauty cannot be a joy for ever.

"I have not seen you to tell you how beautiful my roses are," she said ; "I have no need to come out to get flowers, now ; but I remembered these here last year, and I wanted some."

"Do you want any more ?" said Jonathan, laying

down his wallet. He went into the copse, without waiting for her answer, and picked two or three. They grew far apart, and it took him some moments to get them.

"I think I ought to be getting home," said Miss Lynn, who saw that the shadows were lengthening, and remembered that her mother would sit in the garden till she came back.

She took the flowers out of Jonathan's hand, and thanking him, moved on a step or two.

"Do you mind my walking with you?" he asked, coloring. "If you'd rather go alone, you've only got to say it."

"Of course I don't mind," she said, an answering flush coming into her cheeks. Why should she let him think she cared whether he walked with her or not?

They started together, and both were silent. Only her light tread and his heavy one beat time together. Jonathan's heart was full. Her words had stung him.

"I know you don't care," he said. "I never thought you did. What can it matter to you whether I—"

She had looked up at him with anxious, wondering eyes. She met his, full of a half-fierce, half-sorrowful eagerness that told her more than any words could say.

Did he care what she thought of him? She thought he had never cared. Was it possible then that this man loved her? Other men's love she had taken quietly, as a matter of course; for were not men loving, and women loving, all the world over?

But that Jonathan should love her,—it made her heart beat. It beat louder, thinking, perhaps, she was mistaken; that he would say nothing more, but begin talking of common things, as he had always done before.

Perhaps Jonathan saw some new light in her eyes as these thoughts passed through her mind. And yet he did not speak. He was looking at her, hanging upon her next word. It was madness, this that he was on the verge of doing; and yet if she said one kind word, gave him one kinder look, he knew nothing could prevent his speaking. His heart was beating with some strange trouble, that was not all trouble. He saw her lips moving, and bent his head. He need not have stooped. Daphne never spoke in whispers when she was moved. But her voice was very soft and clear as she said—

“I never thought you cared. And why should I?”

“Cared!” he said, “you never thought I cared? Oh, for God's sake then, will you let me speak out now?”

She did not answer, but he saw that the orchises shook a little in her hand. And he went on, trying to calm himself, and to steady his voice.

"I've loved you—I can't say how long I've loved you. I'd best tell you that at once, and that I love you now. And if you're angered, you can send me away before I go on speaking."

"I've loved you though I knew you were above me—though I'm only a poor working man, without learning, and—"

"O Jonathan!" she broke in, looking up at him with a distressed face.

"Don't you want to hear it?" he answered. "My God, how pale you are; I've been a fool after all, and I thought I could keep silence altogether—but till now heaven and earth has stood between us, and though you hate me, I'll be better for speaking out."

"Jonathan," said Daphne, "I think it was only earth stood between us."

His lips were apart, and a glory of hope was coming over his face.

"Tell me what you mean—I'm so dull—what about 'only earth'?"

"I mean—I believe God meant us for each other."

"But do *you* mean it?" he cried, standing still before her, to bar her way.

She looked up at him, still quite pale, but with a smile, and said firmly,

"Yes, Jonathan, I do mean it. I didn't know till you asked me. But now I see I've known it all along."

* * * * *

Perhaps they were the most silent lovers that ever plighted troth. But to both of them their bliss was so unexpected and strange that words seemed but poor things.

Jonathan looked up into the June sky, and back into the copses, and on to the village, and then at Daphne walking by his side. Was it all true? Did she really love him? Had she promised to be his wife?

The sight of the houses and the village loungers brought them to themselves.

"I should have asked you to go on alone," said Daphne, smiling, "if you had been only Jonathan Cleare and I the schoolmistress. But as it is, I think we can walk into the village together, Jonathan."

They went in at the school-house gate, and found Mrs. Lynn had left the garden.

"I think I had better tell her first," said Daphne, "before you come in. Come again to-morrow instead."

"Give me a rose, then," he answered, "something that I can look at, and feel it is all true."

They went in at the little garden gate together.

"They'll be yours after all, Jonathan," she said. "We'll both go on working—you at your forge and I with the teaching. And then mother can go on in the old home with us just as before."

He had taken the rose from her, and with it her hand. He was looking at her wistfully, trying to say something.

"Daphne," he said, "I don't like to ask you for what I want. It's all so strange to me. The Almighty has been so good, I can't believe it. And you're still so much above me," he went on, looking at his working coat and the wallet on his shoulder,— "I haven't the face to ask you for it yet. But tomorrow—if it's true you're going to be a poor man's wife—will you give me a kiss?"

"You'll have put your best coat on then," she answered, smiling. "I would rather give it to you now, if it's the same to you, Jonathan."

"I've got something more to ask you," said Jonathan the next evening to Daphne. "You know Andrew's my mate; would it go against you to come and see him—and 'Scilla?"

"I will come with you now," she answered after a pause in a subdued voice.

"Drew thinks you'll spurn her," he said, as they went down the village to the Males' house. "He's always been my mate, Daphne, and it's the only

thing that could vex me now, if you felt you couldn't put up with him and poor 'Scilla."

He looked at her for a reply, but she did not speak. Even he did not understand the struggle and the tumult within her.

Jonathan went in, while she waited outside.

"Drew," he said, "Daphne wants to see your wife. She's waiting in the doorway."

"Won't she come in?" said Andrew, getting up, with a pleased smile on his face.

"Let them be alone first," said Jonathan.

'Scilla rose from her seat in the window, where she sat sewing under the shade of Martha's big geranium, and looked at Andrew.

"Don't be afeard," he said to her, gently, "she's come a-purpose to see you."

"My dear," said Daphne, holding out her hands, "we must be friends because Jonathan and Andrew care so much for each other."

They kissed each other under the porch, while the wild clematis on it played its trembling shadows over their faces.

Jonathan and Andrew looked at each other without speaking. They had seen it.

THE END.

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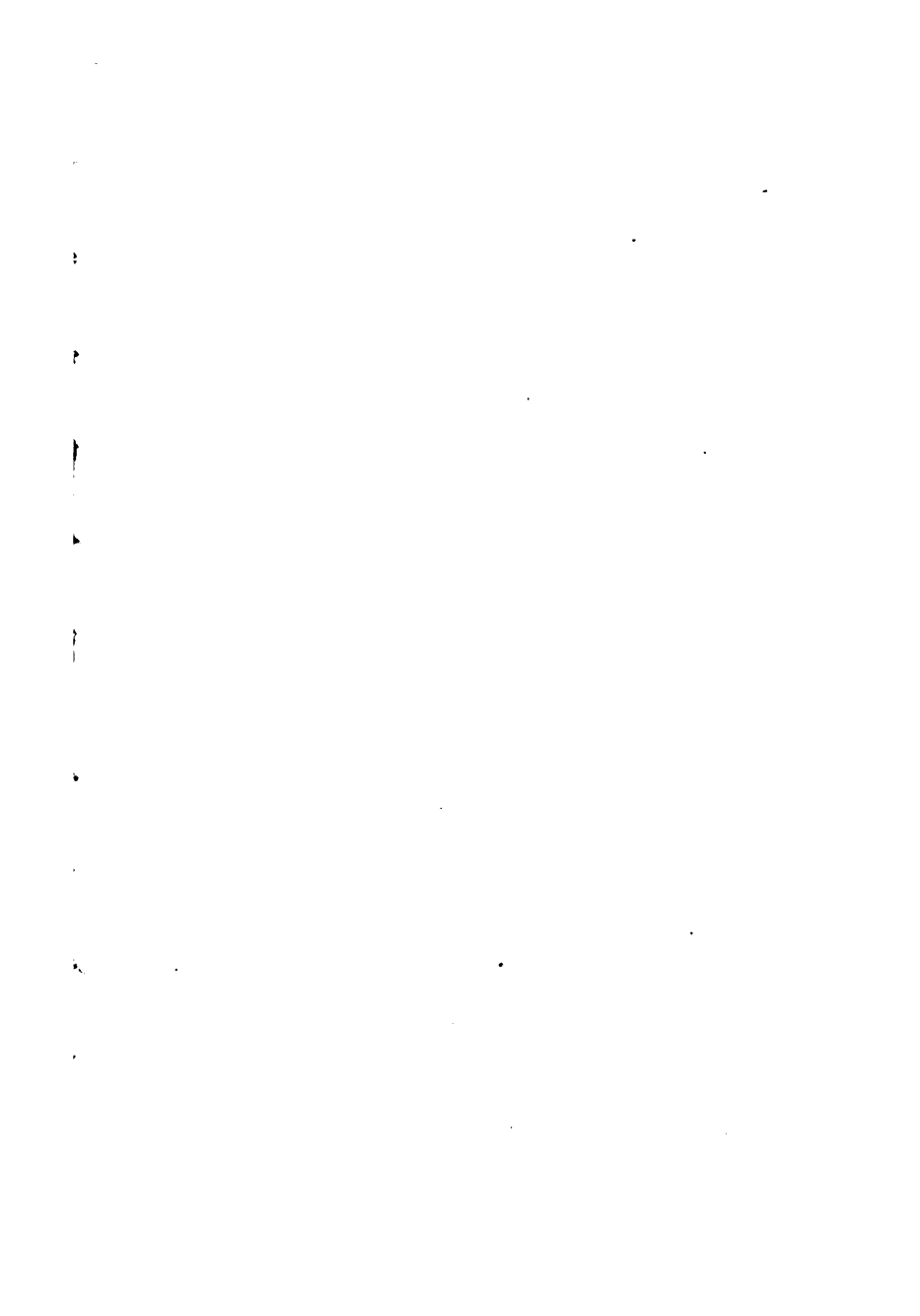
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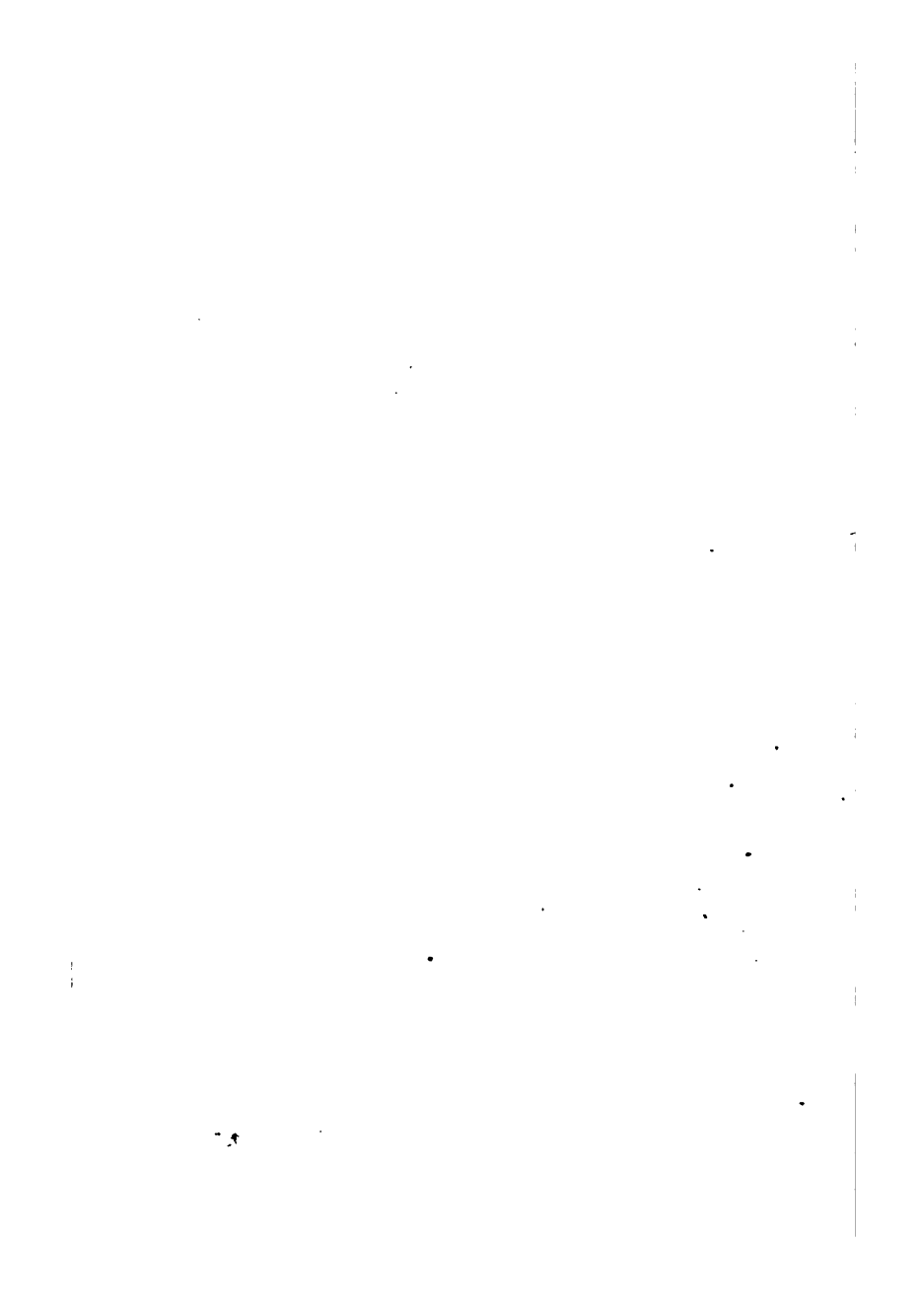
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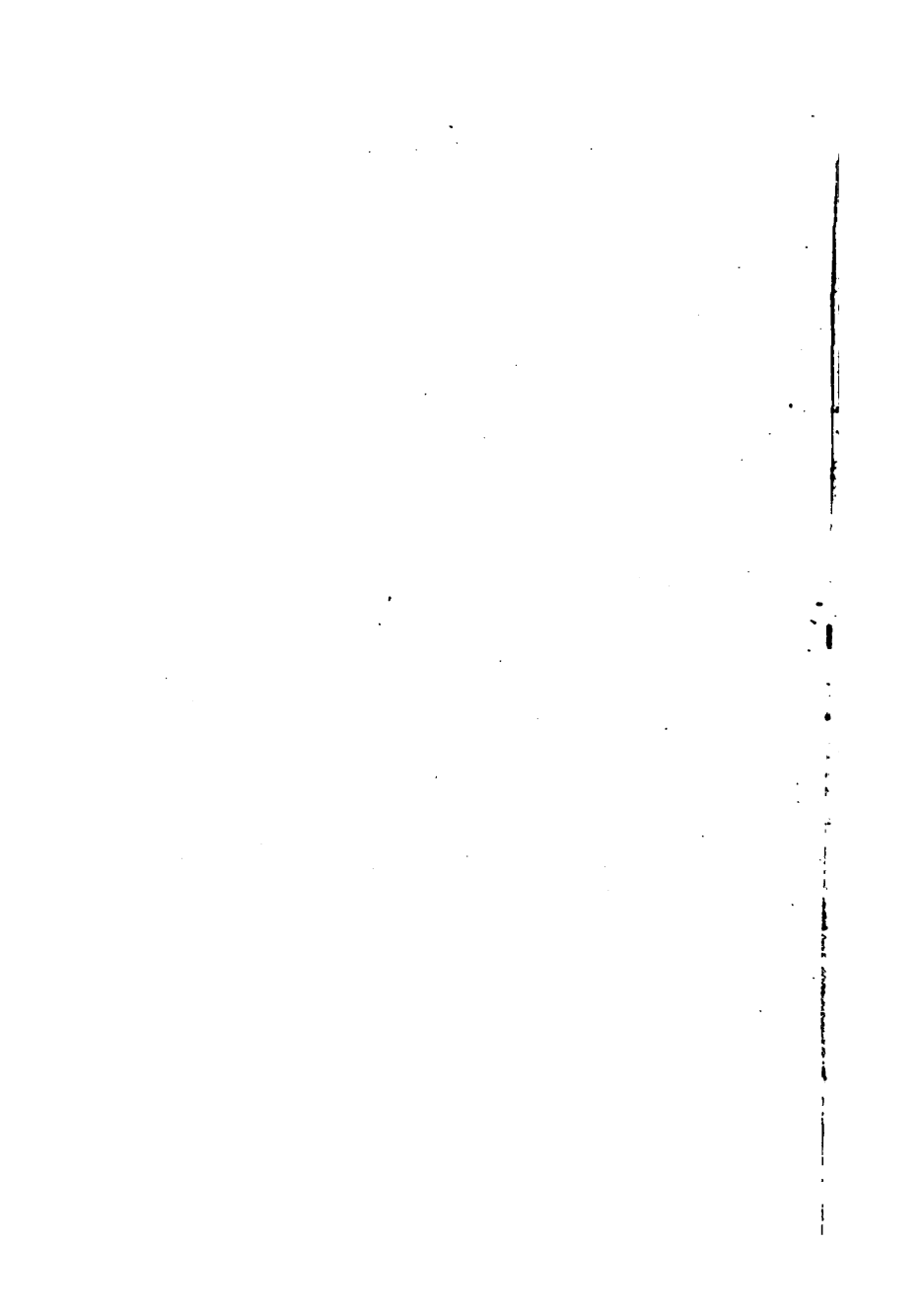
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